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Creating a Smarter & Better Home

Solar Panels

Save Energy & Beat the Price Cap

ICF: The Efficient Way to Self Build

Add Light & Space

Glazing Ideas & How to Knock Through Walls

NEED TO KNOW

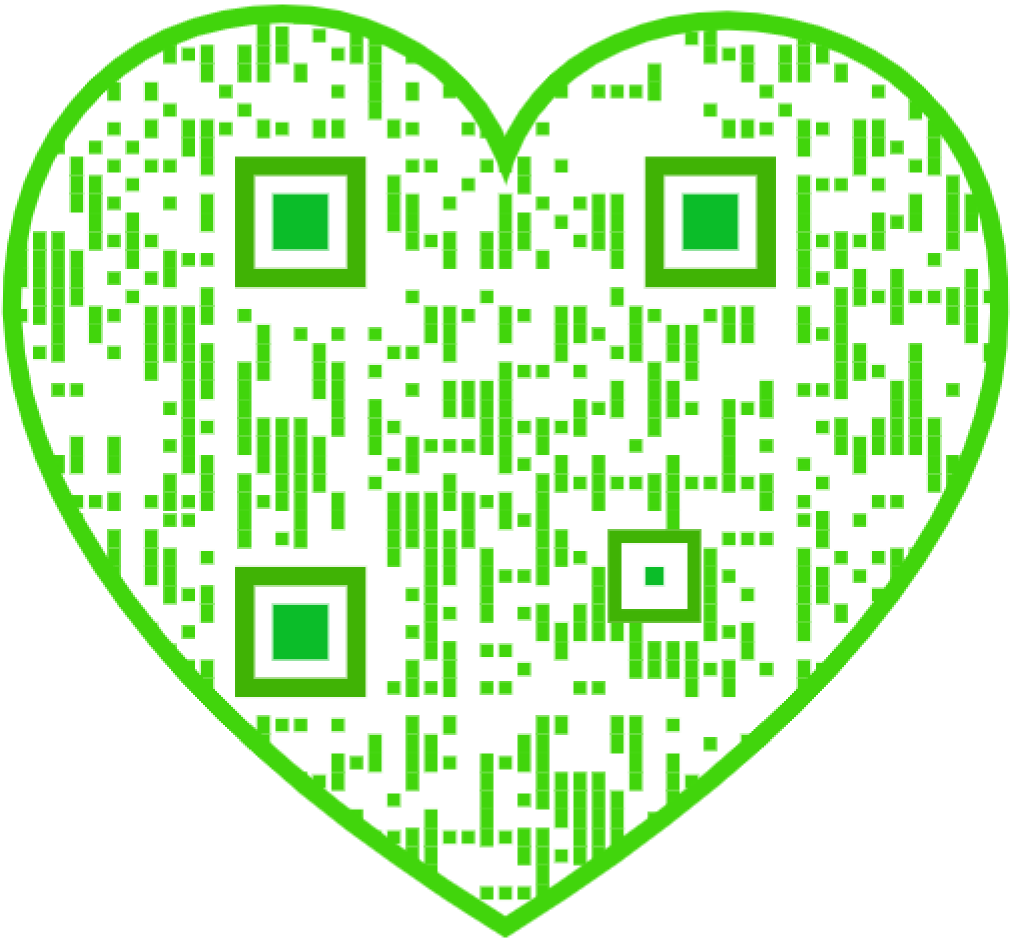
- Ventilation, Cooling & Indoor Air Quality
- Basement Benefits
- Staircase Design: Get the Wow Factor

Sliding Door Costs

Glazed Door Price Guide for 2025
PLUS Choosing a Quality System

AMAZING REAL PROJECTS

Sustainable Renovation | Barn-Style Oak Self Build Home | Extending an Old Cottage | Stylish Brick Home Builds



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Welcome

As someone who's recently bought a real fixer-upper, ripe for renovating and adding more space, I'm delighted to see there's plenty for me to get my teeth stuck into in this issue... pure coincidence, I assure you. With guides on ventilation and cooling for existing homes (page 61), renovation pro Kate Sandhu's tips on the best approach to knocking through walls when opening up rooms (page 72), an in-depth look at sliding door costs (page 88) and architect Julian Owen's insight into great staircase design (page 92), that's a decent chunk of my project covered. Add to that Erika Chaffey's fully-updated Extensions Bible 2025, bundled free with the mag and bursting with the latest amazing ideas and expert advice for value-added projects, and I'll definitely be dipping back into this edition's content!

One of the best ways to glean new and essential knowledge – before you get cracking with your own self build, home renovation or extension – is to get the lowdown from people who've recently tackled their own projects. That's why every issue of Build It includes a themed look at finished houses (this month it's creative brickwork, on page 17), along with the most detailed reader home coverage (starting on page 25) you'll find in any mag – complete with cost breakdowns to help you understand how much you should budget to realise the features you most want. No other magazine gives you this level of granular detail. I'd like to think this is just one of the reasons why Build It is the UK's most read self build magazine, as verified by official ABC audits.

There are plenty more ways you can connect with us and move your project forward – from the Build It Live shows (www.builditlive.co.uk) through to our website (www.self-build.co.uk) and more!

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR

EDITOR'S FAVOURITE FEATURES

72

OPENING UP SPACES

Renovation pro Kate Sandhu shares the key steps when renovating to create open-plan rooms, plus tips for a functional layout

80

Making the most of SOLAR PV

Drawing on his own experience of living with solar panels, Gerald Cole gives his top tips on how to achieve a high-quality PV install – and what he might do differently 14 years on

MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. Alongside putting together content at www.self-build.co.uk, this issue he's curated a wow-factor selection of brick projects (page 17).

ERIKA CHAFFEY is Build It's features writer. In this issue, she takes a closer look at the most effective design tricks to ensure your house is filled with natural light (page 56).

SCARLETT DEAMER is Build It's editorial assistant. From page 9, she's sourcing the latest news, products and materials; while on page 64 she investigates the pros and cons of building with ICF.

MARK STEVENSON has years of experience in the construction industry and is the current chair of NaCSBA. On page 76, he explains why a basement could be a great addition to your self build.

JULIAN OWEN is Build It's design doctor and a respected self build architect with his own practice. On page 92, he shares his expertise on how to craft the perfect staircase design.

JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom building, and a regular at Build It Live. Her tips on getting consent for an annexe are on page 84.

KATE SANDHU is a renovation expert, with a vast knowledge of project management and how to approach a refurb. Check out her guide to knocking through internal walls on page 72.

MARTIN GAINE is a former council case officer turned independent planning consultant, and a regular expert at Build It Live. Read Martin's planning guides at self-build.co.uk/martin

GERALD COLE is an experienced self builder and was launch editor of SelfBuild&Design magazine. On page 80, he looks at how to make the most of solar PV, based on his own project.

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As part of our sustainability commitments, Build It magazine is made of material from well-managed forests and other controlled sources.

COVER IMAGE: THE GOODEYS' STUNNING BARN-STYLE SELF BUILD HOME (PAGE 36). PHOTO: NIKHILESH HAVAL

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NATIONWIDE
SERVICE

44

17

36

26

REAL-LIFE HOMES

COVER STORY **Project inspiration: brick homes** 17
Thinking of using this tried and tested construction material for your build? Sander Tel showcases a selection of unique masonry projects to inspire your scheme

Mid-century magic 26
With the help of local designers, Claire and Chris Lunt sustainably transformed their 1950s property into a cosy, contemporary home. The extension and renovation features a playful mix of colours and natural finishes

Barn life 36
Taking full advantage of planning changes to brownfield sites, Anthony and Alison Goodey created a breathtaking traditional oak-framed house on their livery stable yard

Old meets new 44
Edinburgh-based couple Julia and Rowan Walker beautifully blended the aesthetic of their 19th century cottage with a modern extension and renovation. The result is a bright family home with exposed brick accents

RENOVATION & BUILDING

COVER STORY **Daylighting ideas** 56
Erika Chaffey takes a look at some stunning architectural features to help maximise natural brightness in your home

COVER STORY **Ventilation & cooling** 61
Creating healthy, comfortable living areas in existing homes

COVER STORY **Building with ICF** 64
Explore the pros and cons of this construction method

COVER STORY **Smart homes** 68
Thinking of incorporating smart technology into your home? We guide you through the key considerations

COVER STORY **Opening up spaces** 72
Renovation expert Kate Sandhu explores what you need to know when creating open-plan rooms

COVER STORY **Basements in new homes** 76
Project management expert Mark Stevenson shares his tips and tricks for designing a successful subterranean zone

68

64

56

84

96

EXPERT HELP

COVER STORY **Making the most of solar PV** 80
Solar panel owner Gerald Cole reveals how this sustainable technology works. Plus, he delves into costs, savings and what he'd do differently if he was installing the tech now

Getting consent for an annexe 84
Julia Riddle takes you through the common planning challenges that come with this type of building project

COVER STORY **Sliding door costs** 88
Find out what makes a good quality setup and what to budget for additional features, plus installation

COVER STORY **Staircase design** 92
Architect Julian Owen shares his expertise and top tips for making a stunning statement with your home's flight

Staircase inspiration 96
From sleek, contemporary solutions to pared-back and traditional setups, we showcase some stunning examples

REGULARS

Inspiration 9
All the essential self build and renovation news, plus ideas to spark your project plans

Ask the experts 98
Our team of specialists tackles your queries

Mortgage guide 103
Get advice and discover the latest deals

Find your dream plot 105
Land-finding advice plus a taster of plots in your area from PlotBrowser.com

Next month 129
What's coming up in our June issue

Architect's view 130
David Nossiter shares his expertise on how to find, plan and design a barn conversion that's the right fit for you

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Discover more about Paul and Mandy's *self-build story*

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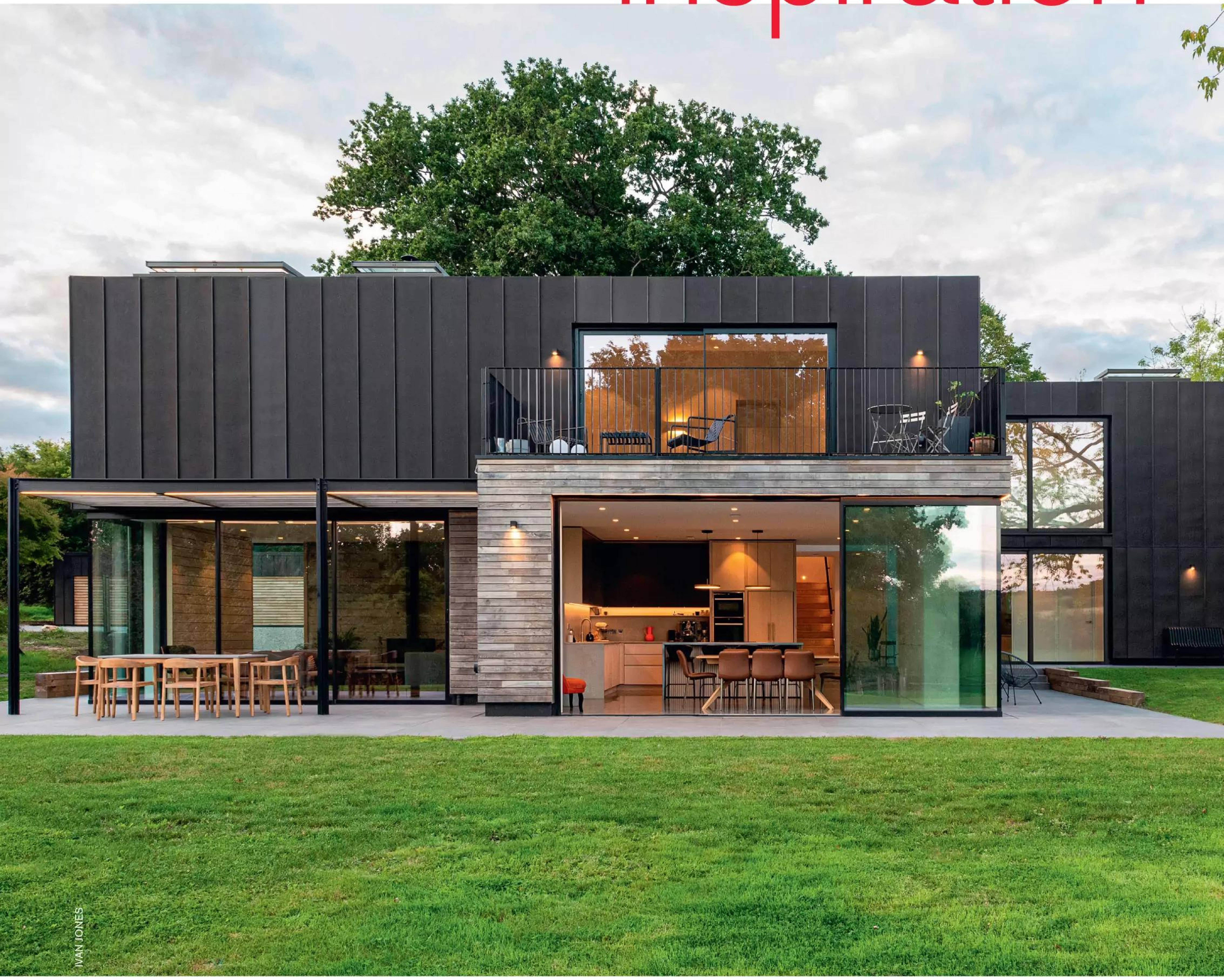


IVAN JONES

Sleek & sustainable modernist home

This breathtaking five-bedroom house replaces a dilapidated property, which had fallen into disrepair after much of its original structure partially collapsed. A unique slipped plan was designed by BakerBrown Architects to provide generous accommodation for the owners, while respecting the stunning characteristics of the site – namely the trees, stream and calming views of the Weald.

The form of the building has been broken down into two barn-like volumes, connected by a central glazed entrance lobby. The southern block comprises the open-plan kitchen and living areas, which elegantly blend into one another. The more private bedrooms and family rooms are arranged in the northern block, which enjoys views of a huge Acer tree via floor-to-ceiling glazing.

Dark zinc and local, sweet chestnut exterior cladding provide a rich background for the changing colours of the adjacent foliage. The wooden finish will weather beautifully over time, while the deep metal will stand up to seasonal changes, ensuring this dynamic clash of materials lasts many years. Expansive glazing not only draws light into the floorplan and frames the scenery, but also takes full advantage of the sunlight for solar gain.

Sustainability was a key consideration for the family, especially in light of the natural, scenic quality of the plot. An airtight and highly insulated building fabric deliver a cosy shell for this countryside retreat. The all-electric dwelling includes 4kW of solar PV panels, an MVHR system and an air source heat pump.

To find out more call 01273 400319 or visit bakerbrown.studio

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Vinyl House

by Benjamin Wilkes

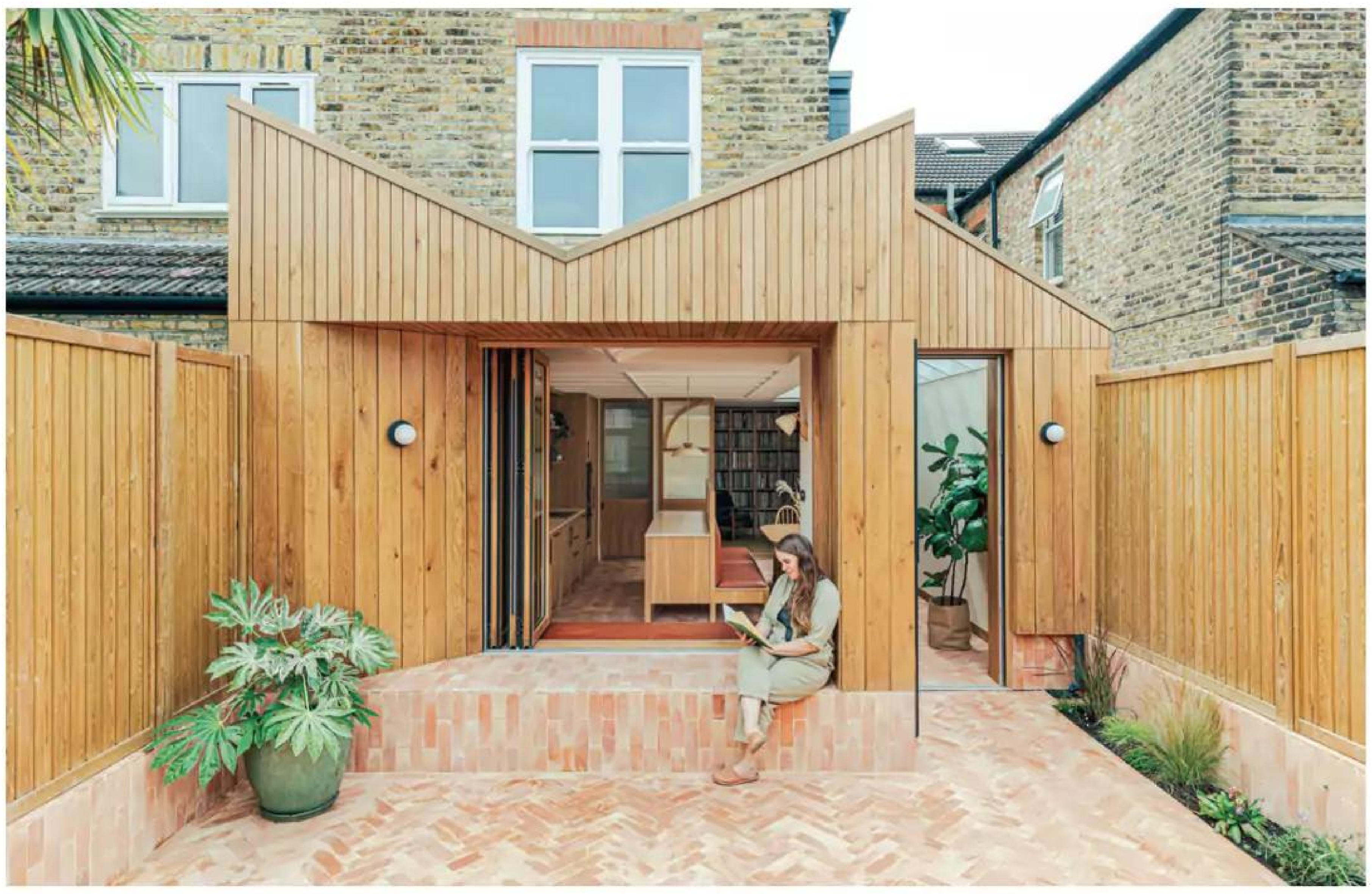
The striking new addition to this property in Leytonstone replaces an outdated rear extension, providing the home with extra living space and access to natural light. Combining the owner's dual passions of music and cooking, this unique entertaining zone contains a warm open-plan kitchen and dining area, plus a bespoke music room directly adjacent.

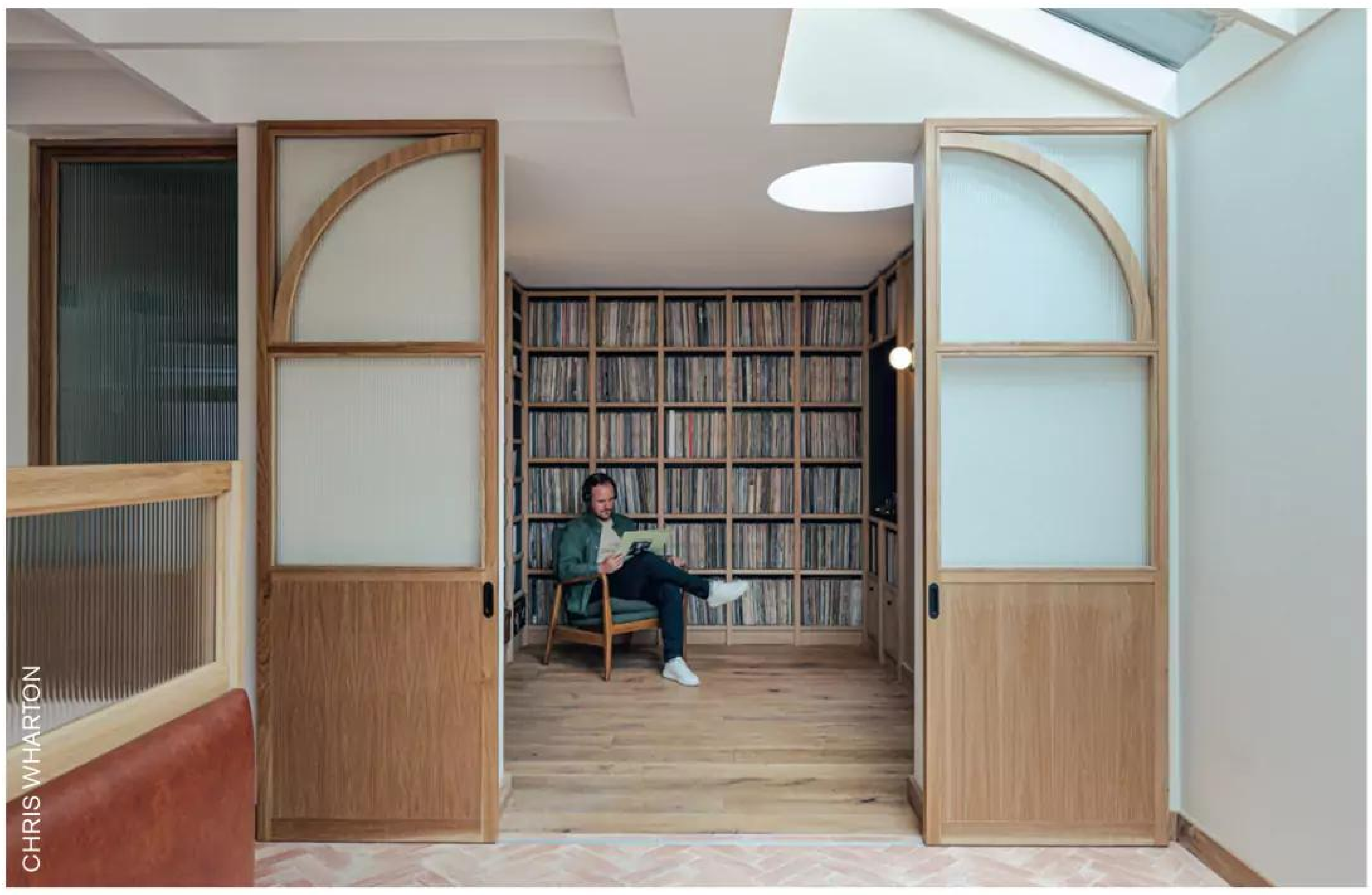
The addition, which also houses 40 linear metres of records, uses Art Deco-inspired fluted screens, which can be sealed off for a more intimate listening experience. The circular motif of the sliding doors references the structure of the main building and complements an oculus skylight.

The kitchen's natural materials palette is made up of oak cabinet fronts, terrazzo worktops and rich cognac leather banquettes. Cork has been used to line the vinyl shelves, helping with the acoustics of the space, while also providing an interesting textural contrast to the wooden joinery. A coffered ceiling adds extra visual interest to the room while elongating the height of the kitchen.

Rustic terracotta parquet flooring unifies the warm, raw interior with the garden. The distinctive butterfly roof mirrors the intricate paving and creates a statement feature to the rear of the existing property.

For more information on this project and the designers visit benjaminwilkes.com





CHRIS WHARTON

Funding for green belt reviews

Labour is expected to give out £70,000 to 133 local authorities who have requested help to undertake green belt reviews and prioritise grey belt land for new housing. So far, most grey belt policy appears to be focused on unlocking large-scale developments – but as momentum grows in planning decisions, it should also start to benefit individual home building projects. The government is also expected to allocate further funds to councils who require help creating or updating Local Plans.

<4%

is the current rate available on the UK's lowest-interest fixed mortgage rates. Following the Bank of England cutting the base rate to 4.5% in early February, a number of providers have looked to stimulate the market with low-rate products. For instance, Lloyds Bank is offering 3.95% on a two-year fixed with a 40% deposit. According to Rightmove, the average two-year fixed mortgage rate is now 5.84%, down from 6.24% a year ago (when the lowest rate was 5.14%).

UK building more Passivhaus homes

According to figures released by the Passivhaus Trust, housing being built to the Passivhaus standard now accounts for approximately 1% of all new homes under construction. Changes to government policy, funding and greater recognition of the value of low long-term energy bills are seen as driving the surge in popularity. The Passivhaus Trust has set a goal of achieving 10% of all new UK housing being built to this standard, which focuses on insulation, airtightness, solar gain and MVHR, by 2035.

What's on?

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nsbrc.co.uk

PASSIVHAUS WORKSHOP

25TH APRIL
FREE, SWINDON

This Passivhaus masterclass covers all the key principles and looks into real-life case studies.

nsbrc.co.uk

BASIC ELECTRICS

3RD MAY
£210, LONDON

This beginner-friendly workshop shows you the simple electrical repairs you can make in your own home and how to do them safely.

thegoodlifecentre.co.uk

DECORATIVE HOME & SALVAGE SHOW

9TH–11TH MAY
£10, HARROGATE

Source beautiful pieces for your home and garden in a stunning countryside location.

asfairs.com

PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE

24TH MAY
£125, POWYS

Brush up on your gardening skills and explore ways to turn your outdoor space into a wildlife haven.

cat.org.uk

More heat pumps needed to meet climate targets

The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) seventh carbon budget report, which was released this February, has advised that, by 2040, an estimated half of homes in the UK should be heated using a heat pump system. This represents a huge increase in current usage, which was recorded as being only around 1% of homes in 2023. Installation rates would need to go up from around 60,000 per annum at present to nearly 450,000 pa by 2030, with hopes of reaching 1.5m pa by 2035. Alongside this, the CCC also called on the government to provide better support to ensure poorly insulated homes can utilise low-carbon heating systems. The committee provides independent advice on methods to combat climate change every two years.

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need to know

Self Commissioned Homes Unit at Homes England

Homes England is the government's housing and regeneration agency. Our main aim is to accelerate housing delivery and regeneration across England, in line with our belief that affordable, quality homes in well-designed places are key to improving people's lives.

The Self Commissioned Homes Unit (SCH) was set up on the back of The Bacon Review – which explored how self and custom build could be scaled up in the UK. It concluded that the government should create a new custom and self build housing delivery division within Homes England, to enable the creation of serviced building plots on small and large sites, and support the delivery of custom and self build housing at scale, across the country. After reviewing the state of the housing sector, the government added that they felt the unit should look at all forms of custom build and community-led housing.

To begin with, we listened to those working in the industry, to understand how best we could support them. We also ensured that colleagues within Homes England, specifically in funding and delivery departments, understood the benefits of self-commissioned homes and how we can work together. In addition, we established a collaborative relationship with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This communication with officials has been really impactful, allowing us to provide delivery advice on policy development.

As it was unclear how many self-commissioned units had been enabled by Homes England over the last few years, we carried out some research to get a baseline that we could measure progress against. We have worked with the Local Government Capacity Centre to create educational sessions – two of which featured speakers from NaCSBA's Right to Build Task Force.

Each local authority has different challenges and also budgets. Therefore, we carried out a regional think tank pilot project where local stakeholders – such as self/custom build enablers, community-led housing groups, small builders, landowners and planners – worked together to suggest solutions for delivery.

Initial direction from the government has been positive. A letter from government to the Chair of Homes England stated that the Agency is expected to aid in the reform and diversification of the housing market, supporting the self build, custom build, and community-led housing sectors.

As well as continuing to support SCH in any way that we can, we have several exciting new projects on the horizon. The unit will look to work with colleagues to consider how new funds could be designed to help self-commissioned home delivery. Furthermore, we have the opportunity to support SCH on our own larger sites, many of which have percentage policies for self and custom build. Finally, given the tremendous success of the regional think tanks pilot, we wish to expand these to other areas of the country.

ANGIE DORAN is head of the Self Commissioned Homes Unit at Homes England. Prior to that she coordinated Glasgow City Council's Self Build Programme, advised the Scottish government on policy, and helped community led housing groups through Assemble Collective Self Build.

Check out the 2024 Build It Award Winners

Build It AWARDS 2024

In association with BUILDSTORE FOR SMART HOMEBUILDERS

The Build It Awards, in association with BuildStore, is the UK's premier celebration of the very best products, services, projects and innovations for self builders and renovators. Every year, our panel of industry experts put all of their knowledge and experience into scrutinising hundreds of high-quality entries, with the goal of helping you to identify the very best options out there for creating your dream home.

From inspiring projects to innovative products, take a look at the winners and shortlist to help you specify the right materials and appoint the right partners to suit your individual project.

From architects to glazing, here are a few of our well-deserved winners...

BEST TIMBER FRAME HOME
Timber Innovations

BEST ICF HOME
ARCO2 Architecture

BEST CUSTOM BUILD PROJECT
Clarendon Homes

BEST STOVE PRODUCT
Mendip Stoves

BEST SELF BUILD UNDER 300K
Scandinavian Homes

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First Step Designs

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product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project

spend V save

£204.12
per m²

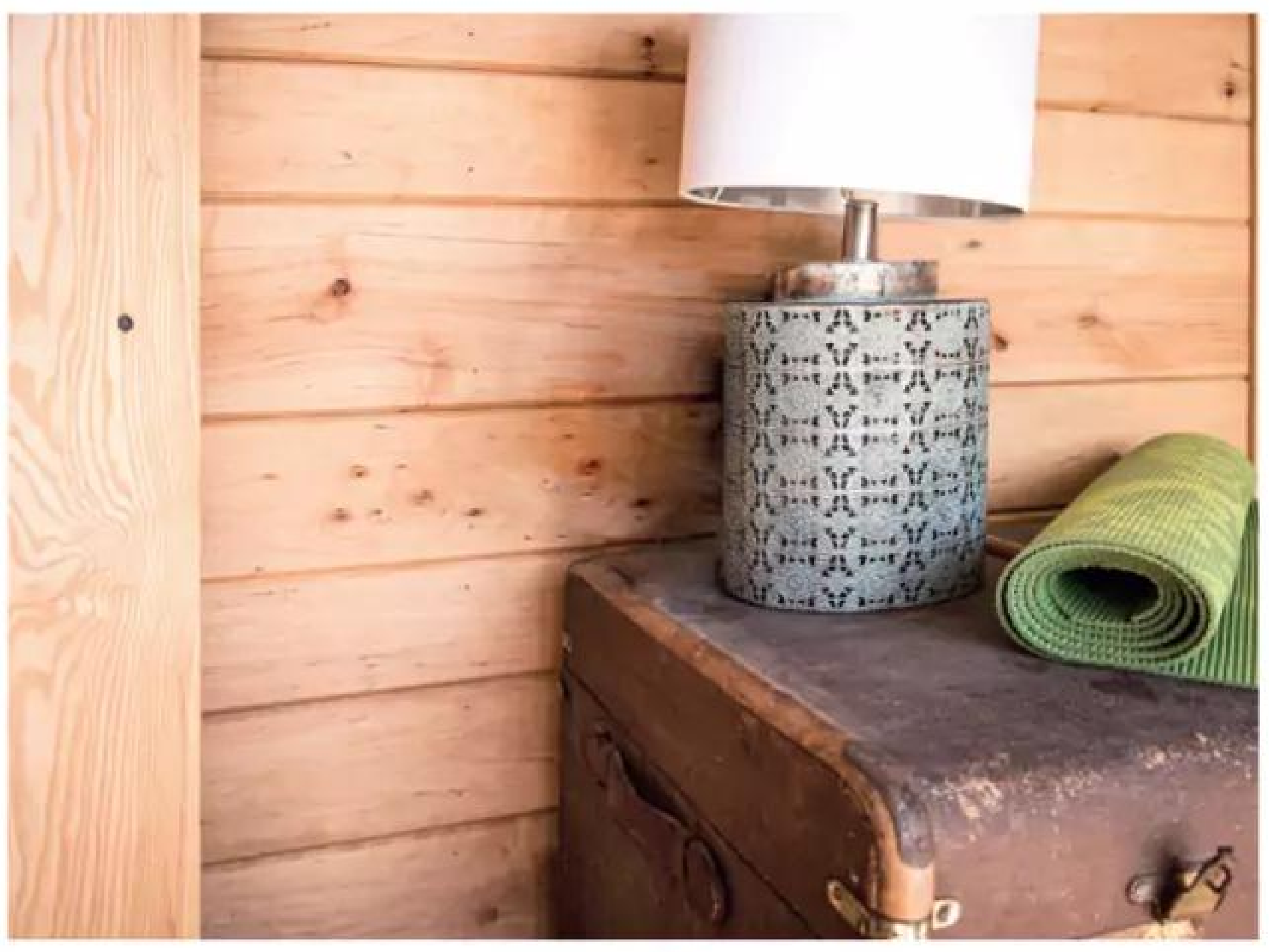
Crafted from recycled materials, these sustainable terracotta tiles offer a warm aesthetic to enhance your indoor space. The rich spectrum of hues and distinct textured finish provides both beauty and functionality. Ca' Pietra reclaimed terracotta pavers, £204.12 per m², hyperiontiles.co.uk

£58.67
per m²

These sleek tiles are a great alternative to the real thing; made from porcelain, which means they're easy to clean and maintain. They come in an assortment of natural colour variations, making the finish look even more authentic. Baked Tiles Shoreditch terracotta range, £58.67 per m², bakedtiles.co.uk

STATEMENT FINISH

These handcrafted, penny-shaped wall tiles draw inspiration from classic south Mediterranean mosaics. The neutral glaze adds a captivating texture and unique blend of natural tones to elevate your interiors. **Zellige Circle tiles, £384 per m², ottotiles.co.uk**



COSY CLADDING

Add a country farmhouse feel to your kitchen and living space with this bespoke wood panelling. Available in English grown ash or chestnut, the sustainable covering works beautifully in barn conversions, period properties and contemporary homes. **Coppice & Crown panelling in ash, £45.60 per m², coppiceandcrown.co.uk**

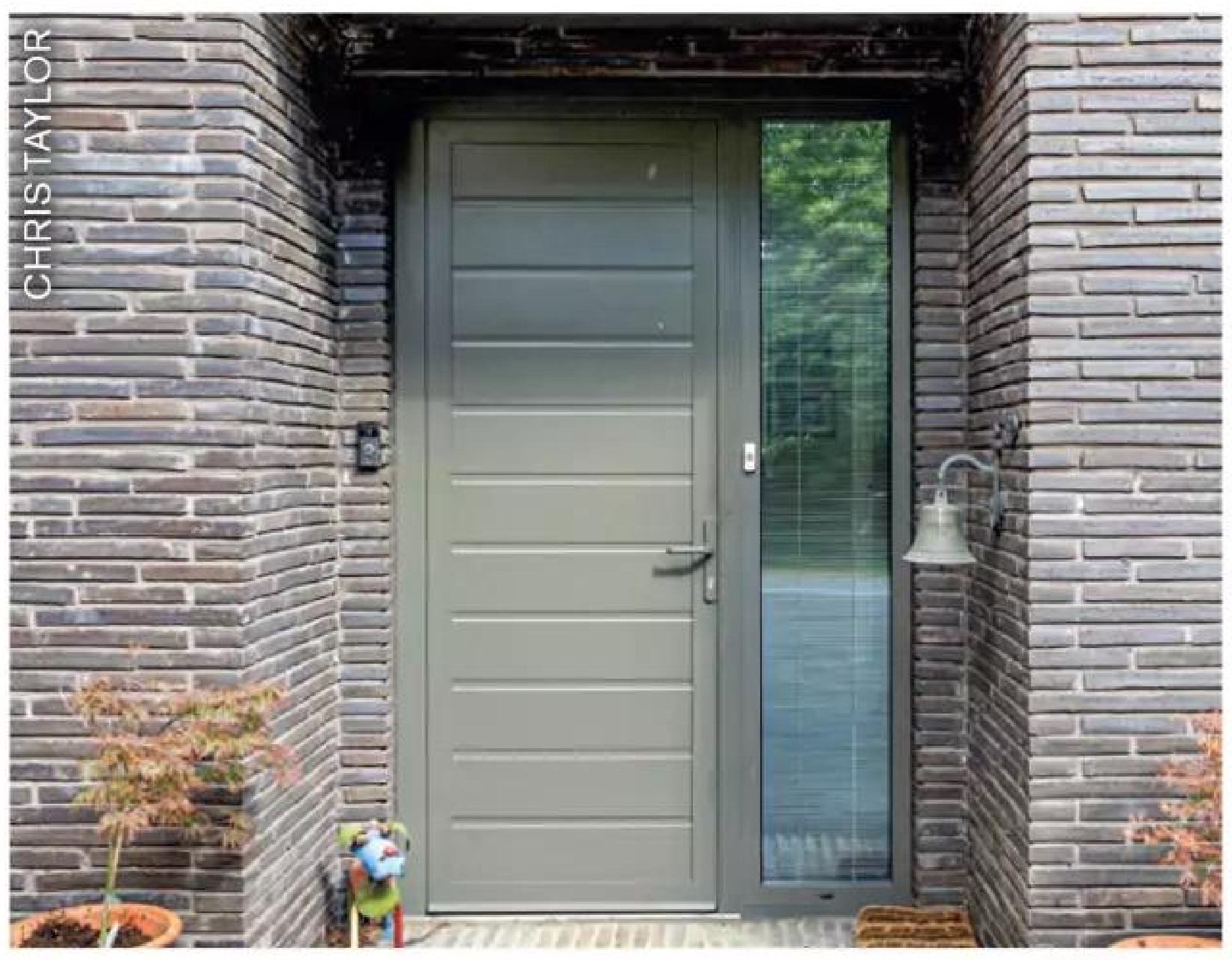
GREEN INSULATION

Gramitherm is the first solution of its kind to be produced from grass, sourced from public parks and grass verges. The result is one of the most sustainable forms of insulation; it is also carbon negative and contains over 90% bio-based content. **Gramitherm 100mm, £15.76 per m², ecologicalbuildingsystems.com**

SCULPTURAL WETROOM PANEL

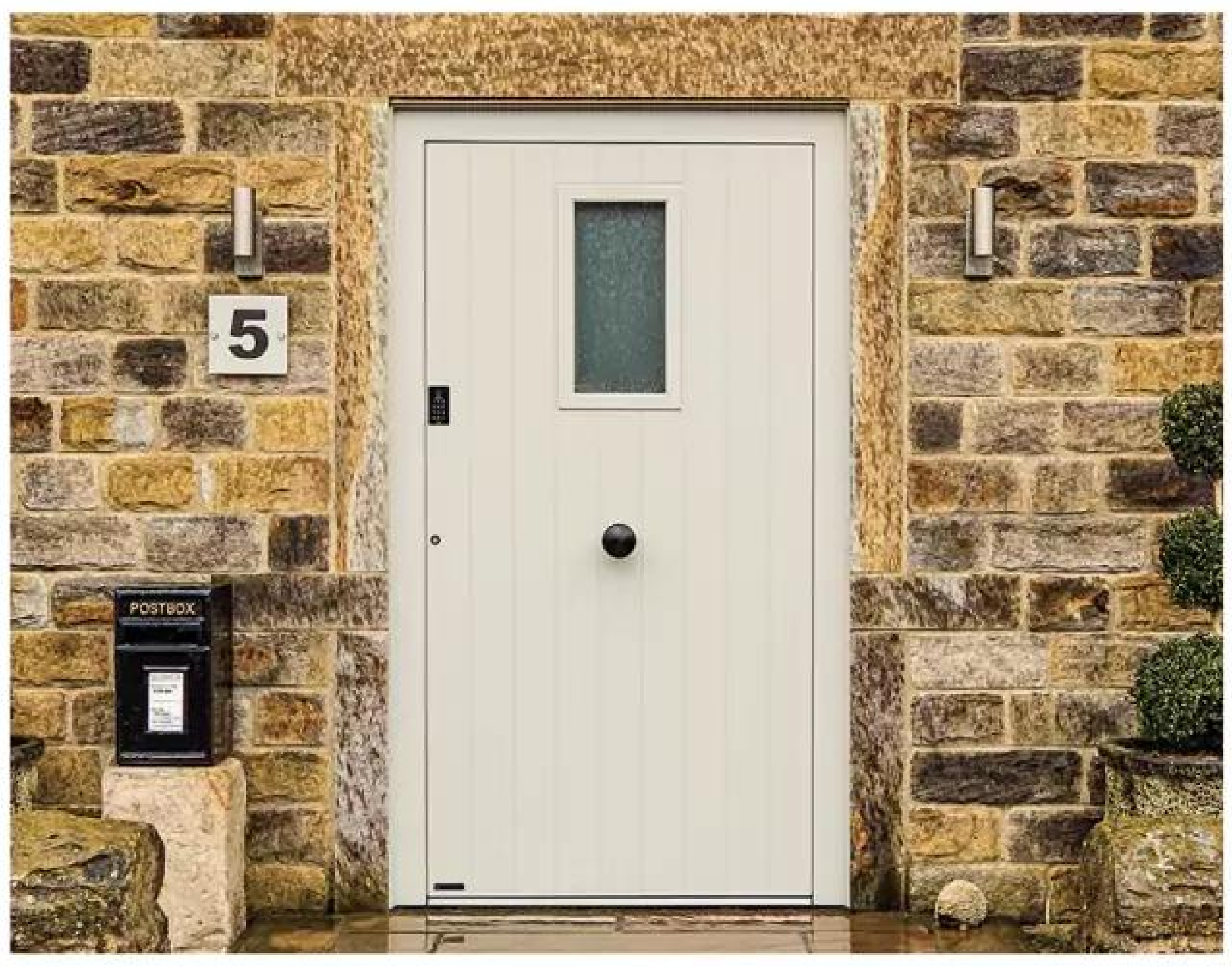
This framed wetroom panel will add some unique architectural interest to your bathroom. Unlike a standard rectangular screen, the distinct curved shape will soften shower areas, helping to create a spacious, spa-like retreat that is homely and inviting. **EauZone EFDP1200 with fluted glass in living brass, £2,175.60, matki.co.uk**

3 of the best ALUMINIUM FRONT DOORS

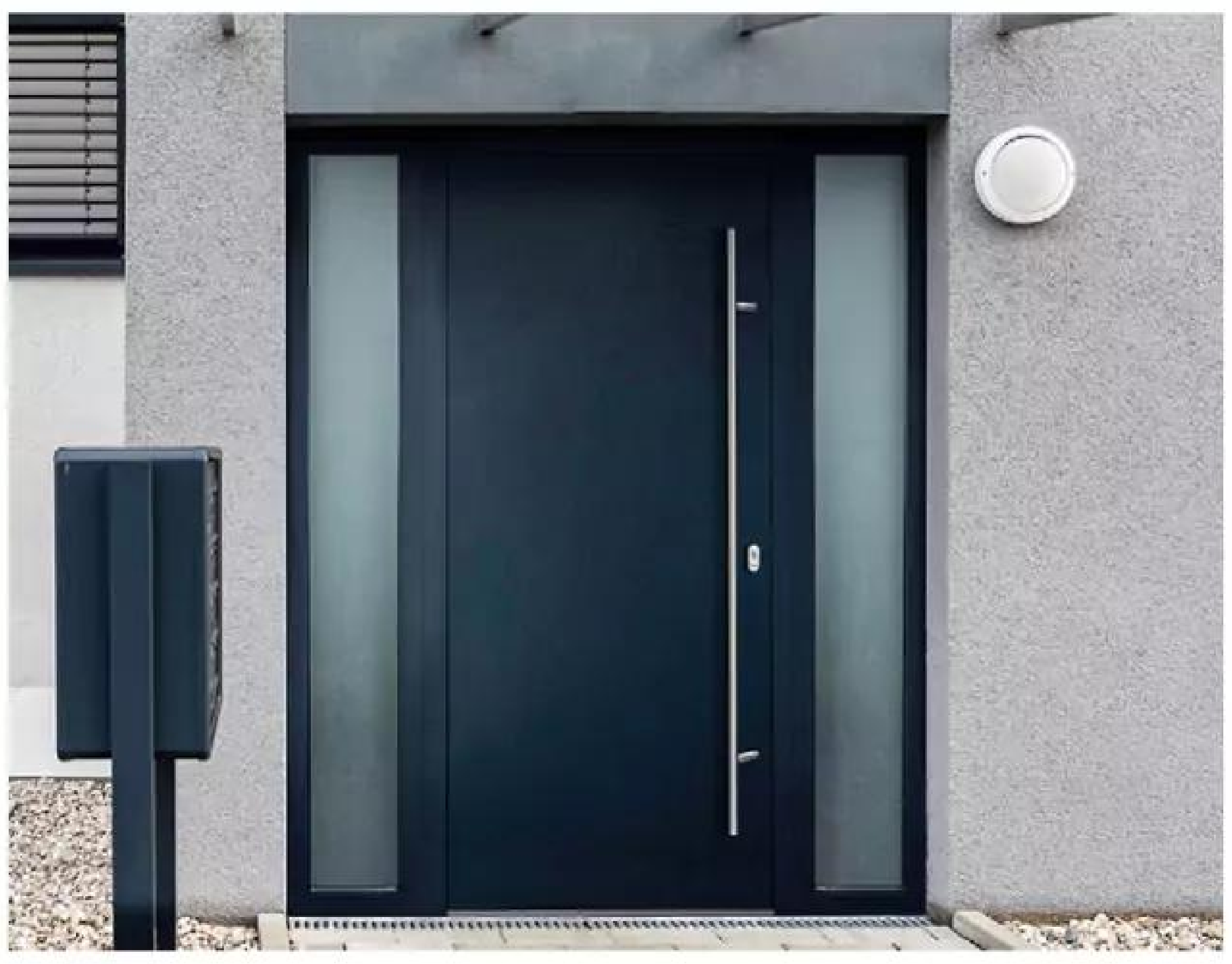


CHRIS TAYLOR

1 *IDSystems Hoveton door with fixed frame sidelight,* **from £5,160, idsystems.co.uk**



2 *Fortis Aluminium F913 in Agate grey with finger scanner,* **from £7,020, fortisal.co.uk**



3 *Kloeber UberFront Hurlock door with two sidelights,* **from £6,132, kloeber.co.uk**

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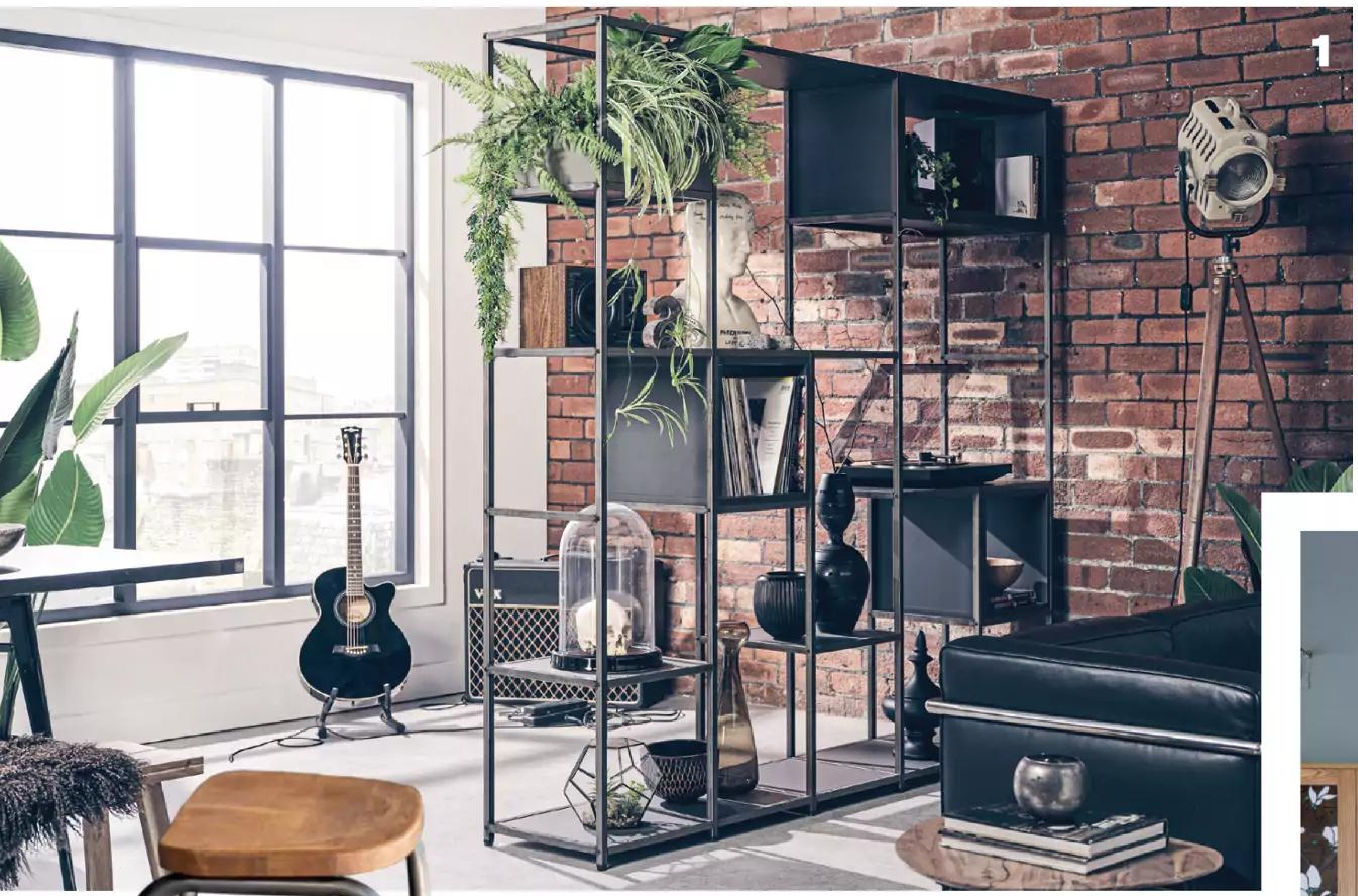
interiors notebook

Create a chic industrial look by mixing clean lines, metal finishes and rich hazel hues



Shopping list

1 *This sleek, modular unit can be used as a stunning feature wall or a stylish room divider. The open shelving gives you easy access and provides a place to display treasured possessions. It is fully customisable and can be tailored to suit your space.* **Shelved unit in graphite, £1,481.60, shelved.co.uk**

2 *Whether you're adding a touch of drama to a hallway, or placing it above a sofa to provide extra reading light, this classic brass wall fitting can be adjusted to produce your desired ambience. For a warmer feel, you can also opt for an antique brass finish.* **Stork wall light in antique silver, £192, pooky.com**

3 *This brushed stainless steel kitchen seamlessly integrates cooking appliances, offering style and functionality. Topped with a stained ash worktop, the surfaces reflect light around the room, brightening the space.* **Bespoke steel kitchen, from £40,000, simon-taylor.co.uk**

4 *These Cosmic Bronze floor tiles, crafted from durable porcelain, feature a rich deep chocolate hue, making them an ideal choice for high traffic areas. With a lappato finish and a rusted effect, they instantly add texture and depth to wall and floor areas.* **Cosmic bronze floor tiles, £51.95 per m², wallsandfloors.com**

5 *Add some old school charm to your interiors with these minimalist bar stools. Crafted from solid oak with a tubular steel frame, they can be neatly stacked away or tucked under a kitchen island.* **Finsbury lab stool in light oak & gunmetal, £69, peppermill interiors.com**

Innovation Architecture / Insight Photography

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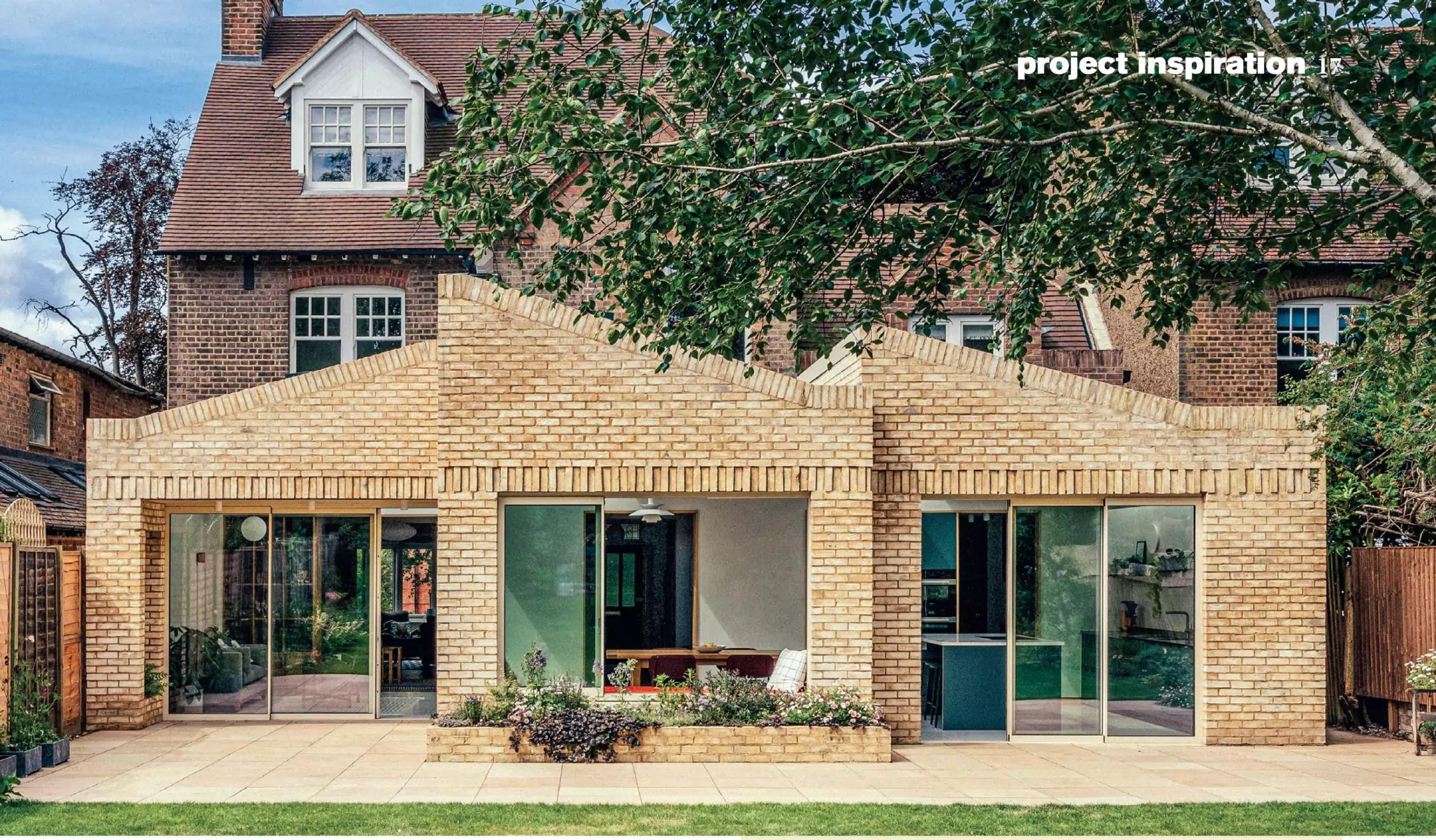


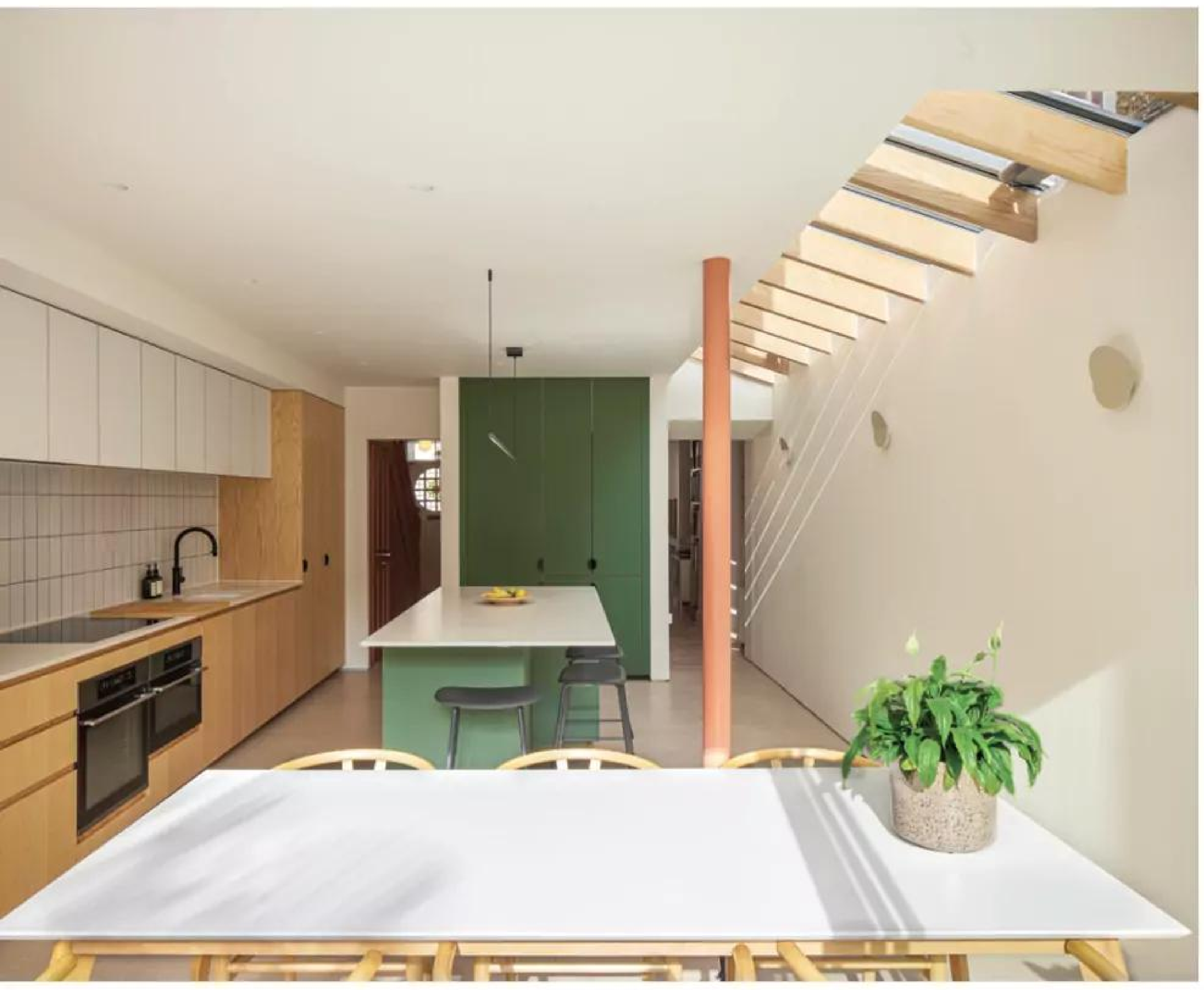
9 BRILLIANT BRICK DESIGNS

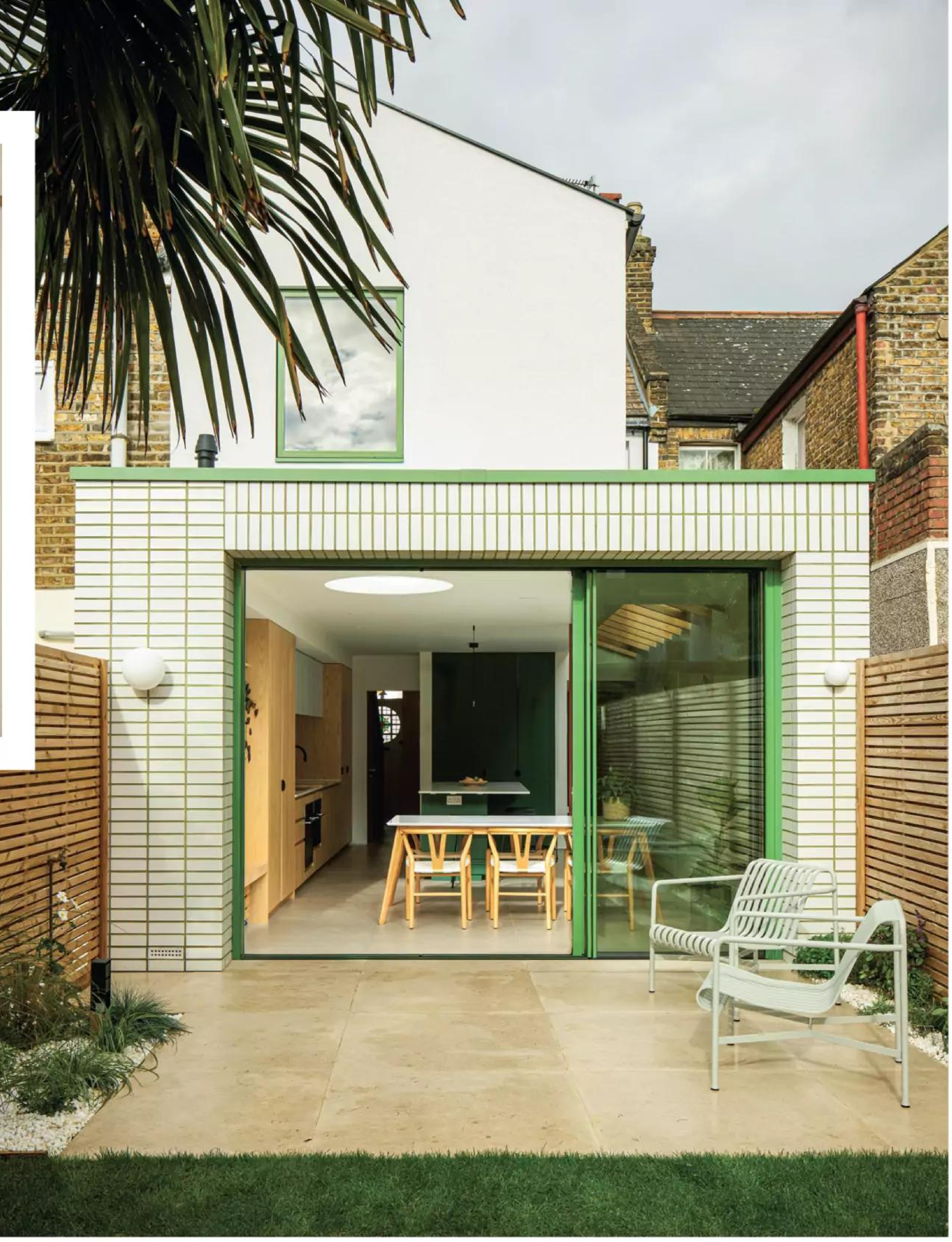
From creative extensions to contextual new builds, Sander Tel shares a collection of nine remarkable masonry projects and speaks to the experts about how to use this time-honoured building material effectively

BEST OF THREE

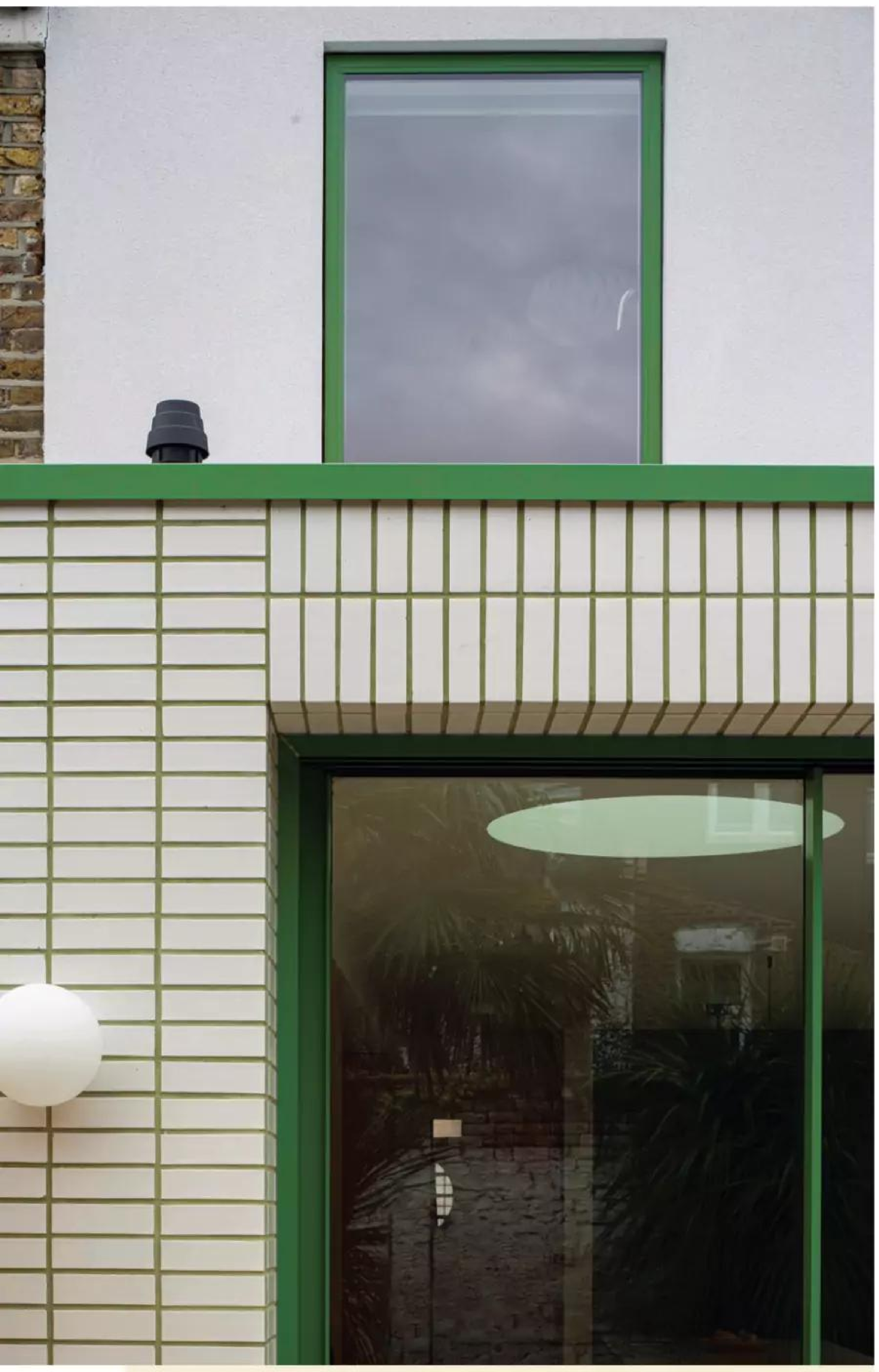
Emil Eve Architects transformed this Edwardian house set in the Harpenden conservation area with an eye-catching brick extension, which provides the owners with a new, open kitchen, living and dining space. Characterised by a cluster of three mono-pitched roofs, each section has its own individual connection to the garden, with a window seat, sliding doors and corner glazing. The structure has been finished with Danish handmade waterstruck bricks from Petersen Tegl, laid in vertical and horizontal patterns to accentuate the extension's unique form. **(www.emileve.co.uk)**

TARAN WILKHU





RICHARD CHIVERS



GOING GREEN

A unique blend of stacked white glazed bricks with green mortar characterises this wraparound house extension in Nunhead. Designed by Yard Architects, the project involved reconfiguring the house's internal layout. It now features a new open-plan kitchen-diner, which makes use of a light, minimalist scheme and is connected to the garden via sliding doors. A deep-set reveal helps to mitigate unwanted solar gain in the warmer months. **(www.yardarchitects.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW HOW TO USE BRICK CREATIVELY

JAMIE ANDERSON from Pend looks at the different ways you can use brick to ensure a lasting impression

Q What different brick bonds & laying patterns are best for creating a wow-factor finish?

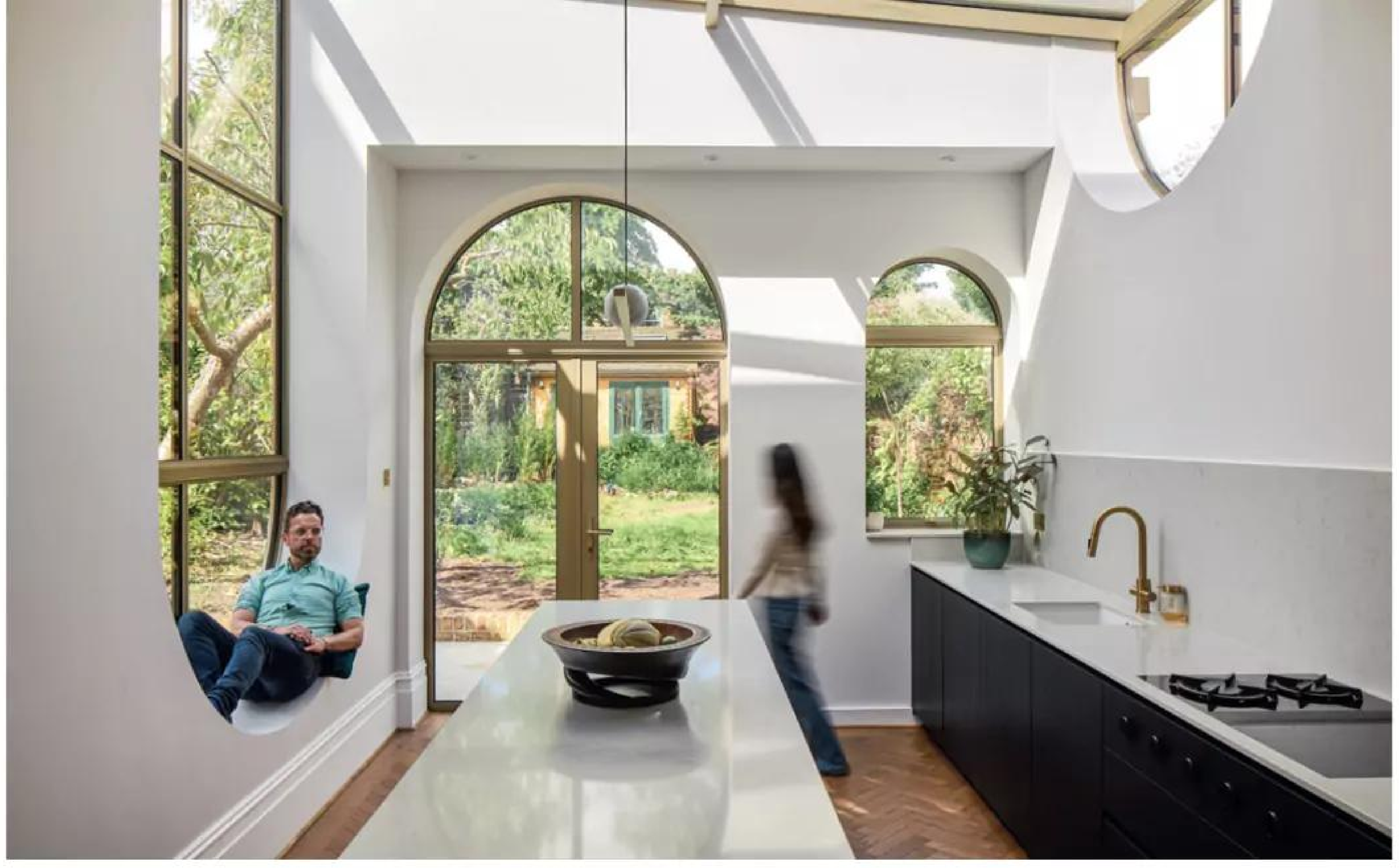
The beauty of brick is in its versatility, and using a standard unit in different bonds and styles can be a cost-effective way to elevate a facade. While the opportunities to be creative are near endless, we enjoy using considered, subtle changes to help express the building's form. For example, at our Clermiston Terrace project (head to page 22), a simple shift from horizontal to vertically-stacked bricks helps define the building's pitched structure.

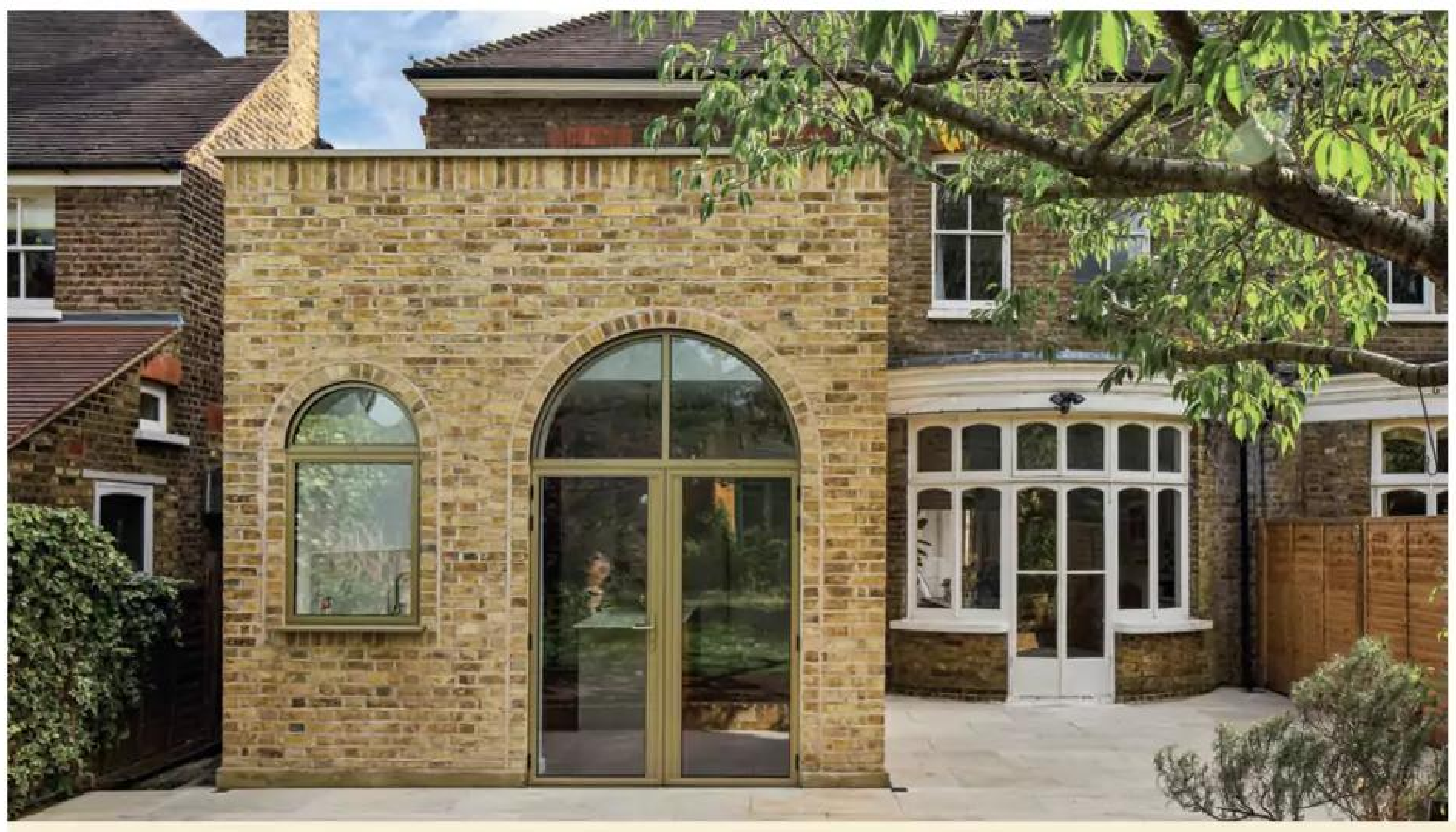
Q How can brick pointing be used to elevate a design?

It's key to consider both the tone and type of brick pointing. In terms of colour, using a matching shade will help the design to feel like a heavier, single mass, while a contrasting tone will provide greater visual intrigue. The type of pointing can also enhance a scheme – recessed pointing, for example, can provide greater depth, while a flush finish provides consistency. We also experiment with overdressed brick pointing, which is particularly well-suited adjacent to historic masonry walls.

Q What other cladding materials can brick be combined with to create an eye-catching exterior?

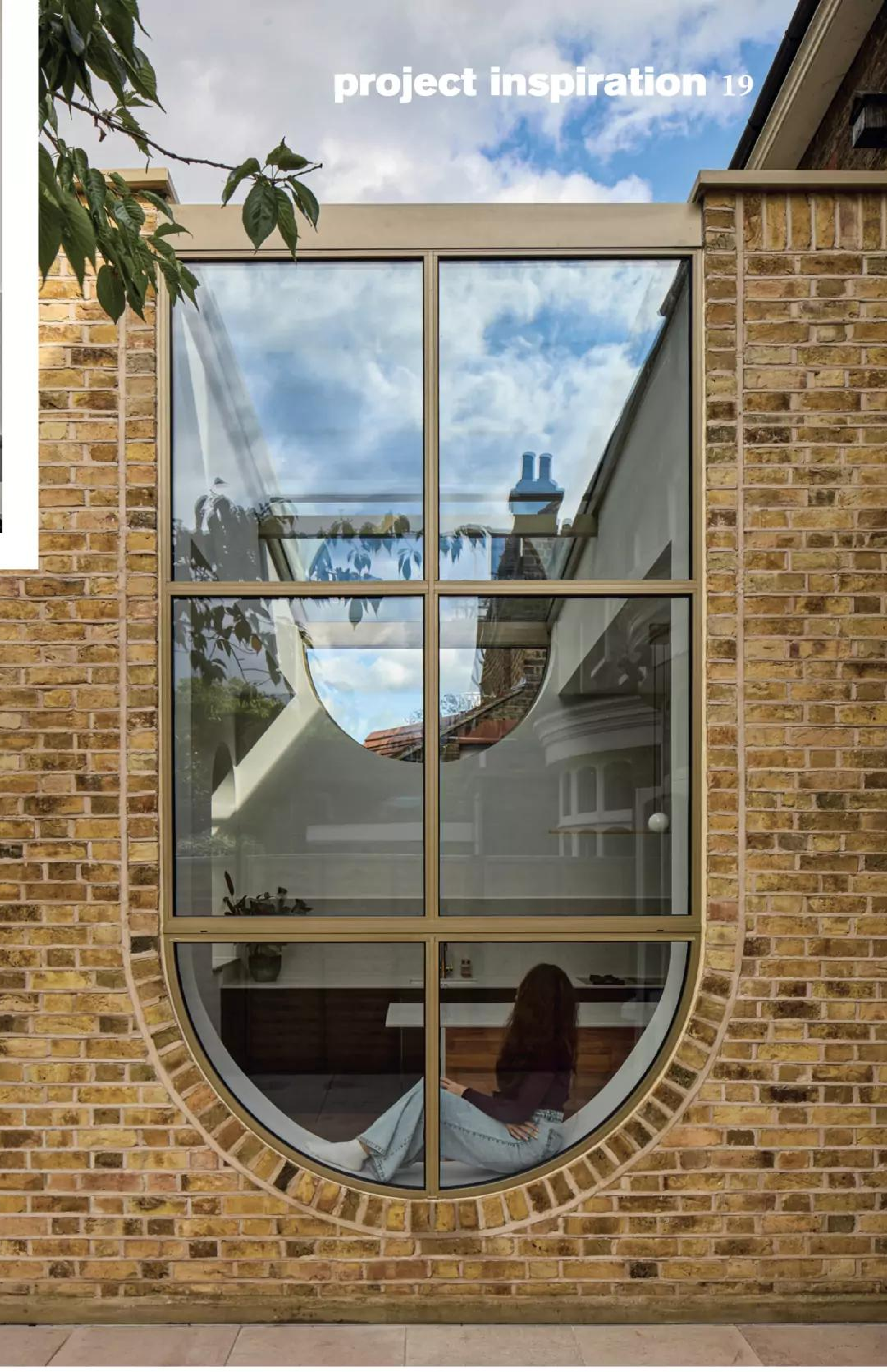
Given the versatility of brick, it is possible for it to stand on its own without appearing too bland. For example, by using different bond patterns, laying styles and altering the type and colour of the pointing. That being said, we do find that a brick finish works well with accents of timber cladding to help soften the house's look, or for something more eye-catching, a metal cladding like zinc can look great, too.



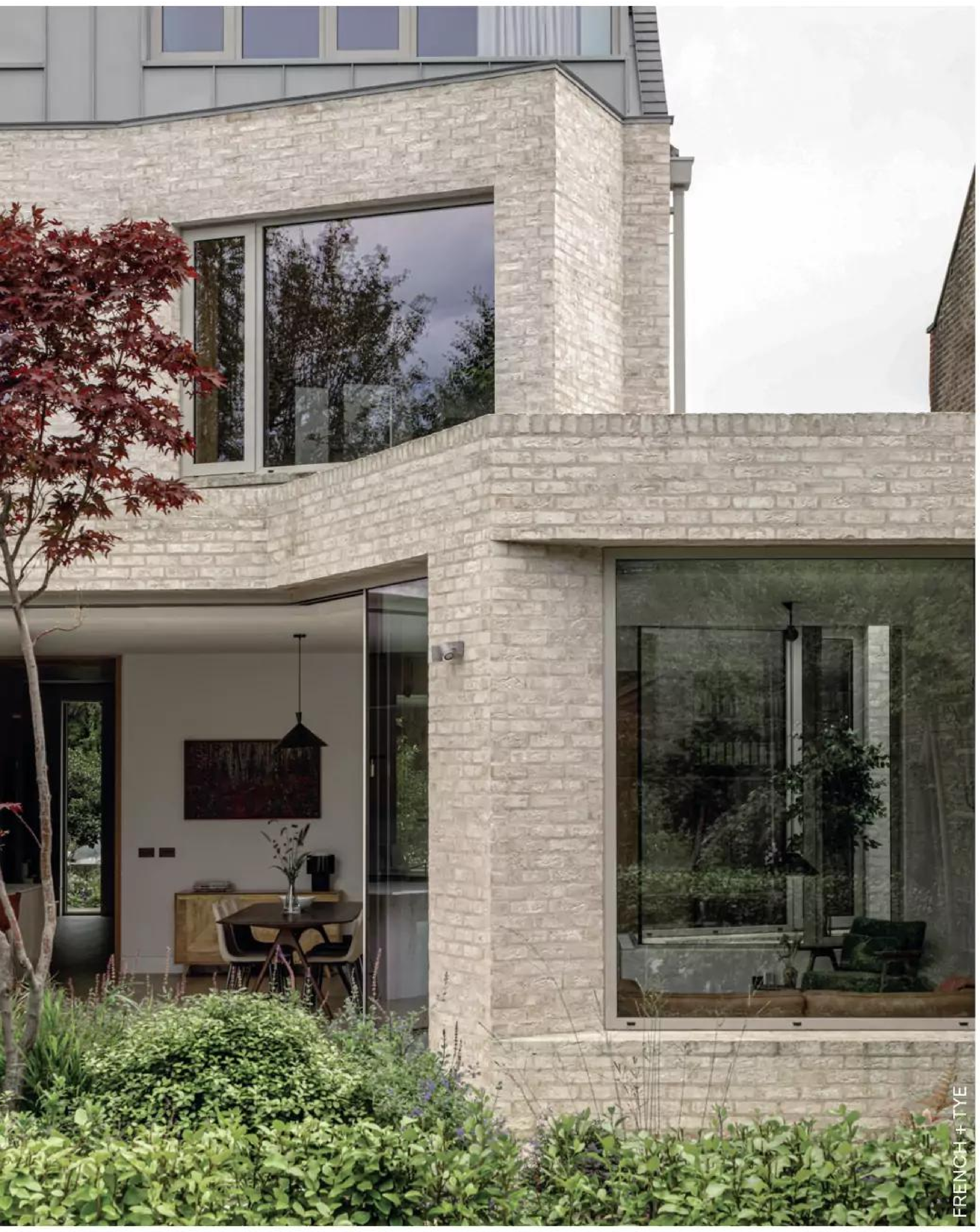


IN FULL SWING

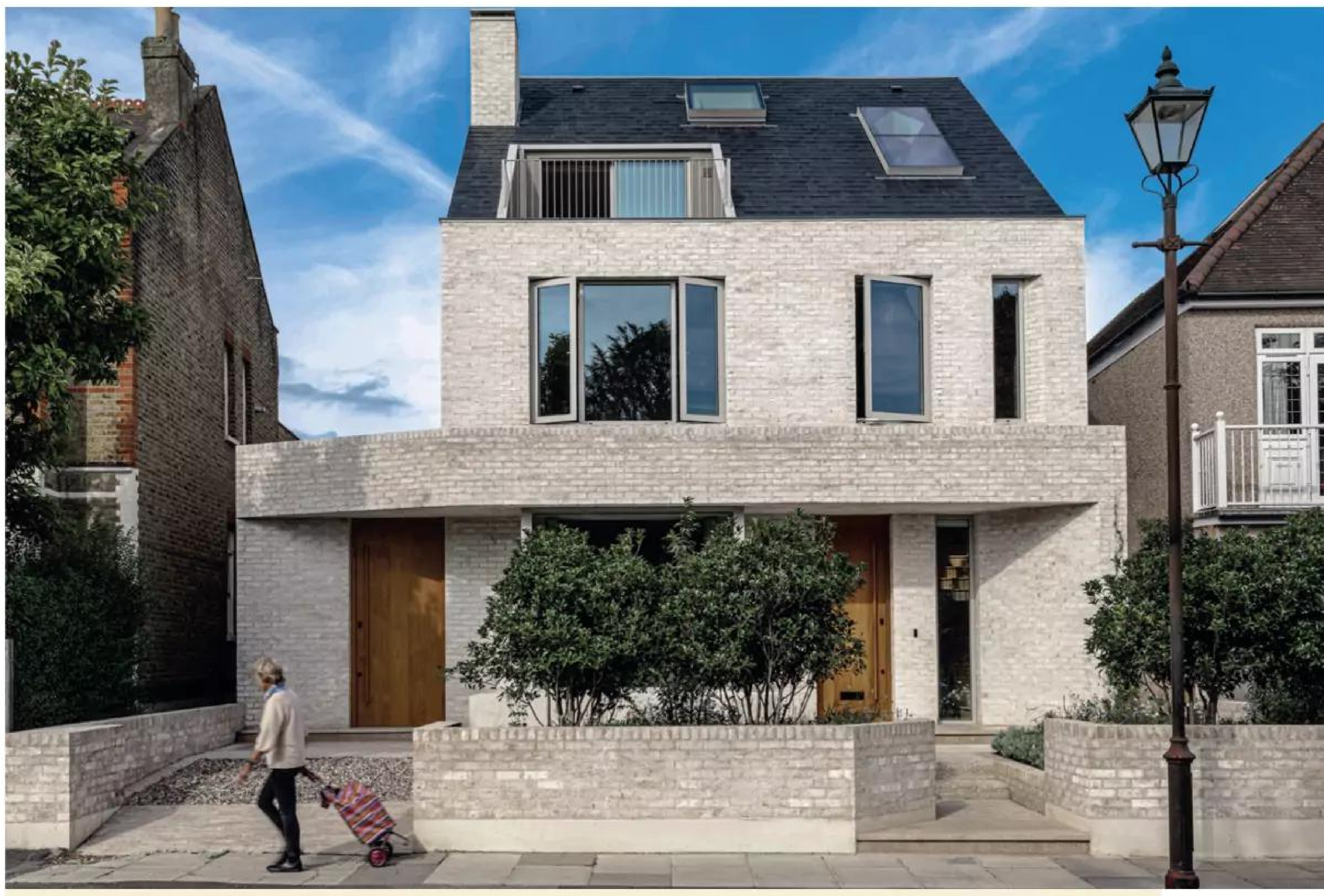
This extension to an Edwardian house features a breathtaking up-and-over, inverted arched window that perfectly captures views of the sky. It strikes a balance between old and new, blending traditional and modern elements seamlessly. The addition has been finished with yellow London stock bricks and lime mortar for a sensitive appearance, with bespoke detailing surrounding the curved windows to help accentuate their shape. **(www.wellstudioarchitecture.com)**



CHRIS SNOOK



FRENCH + TYE

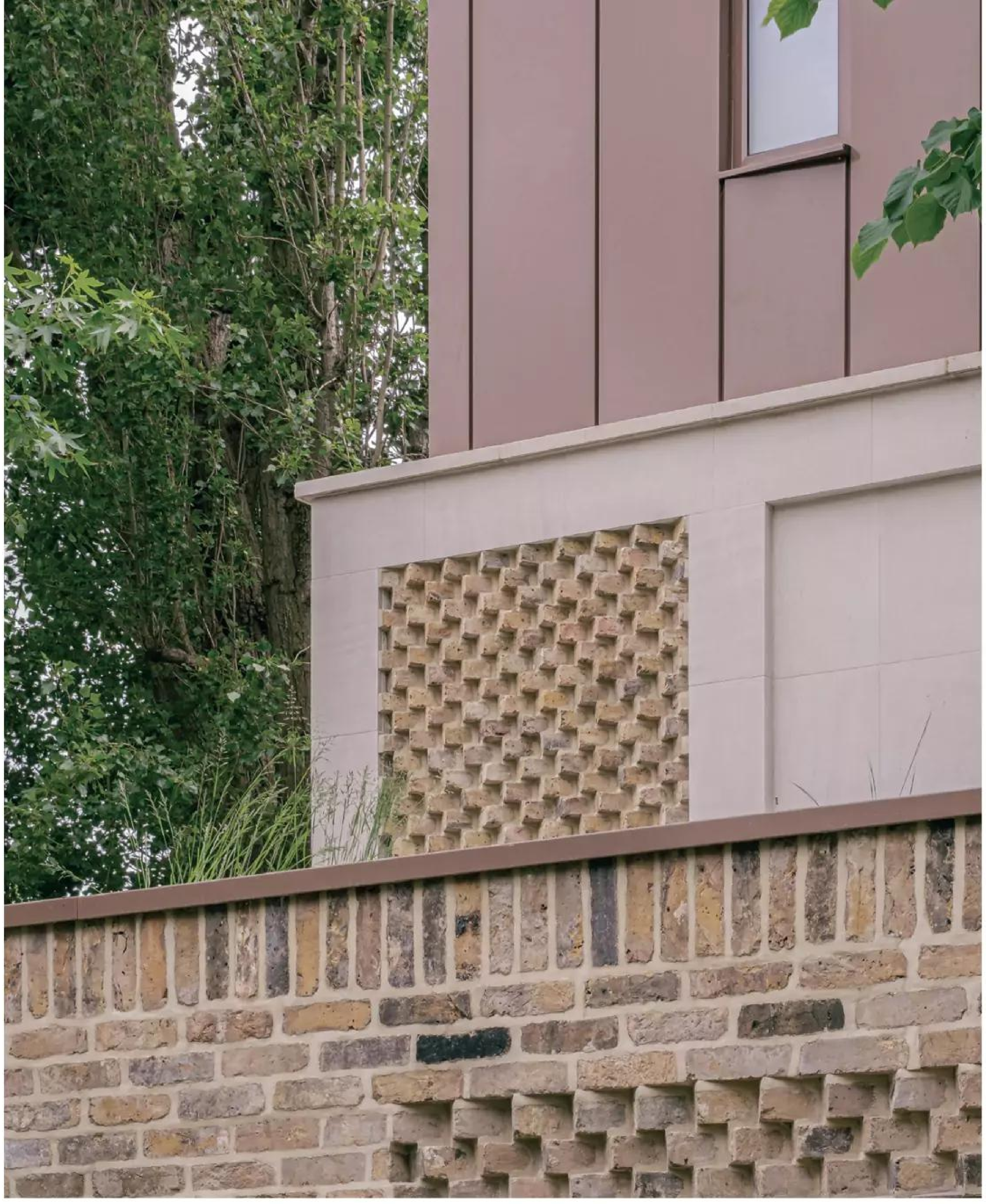


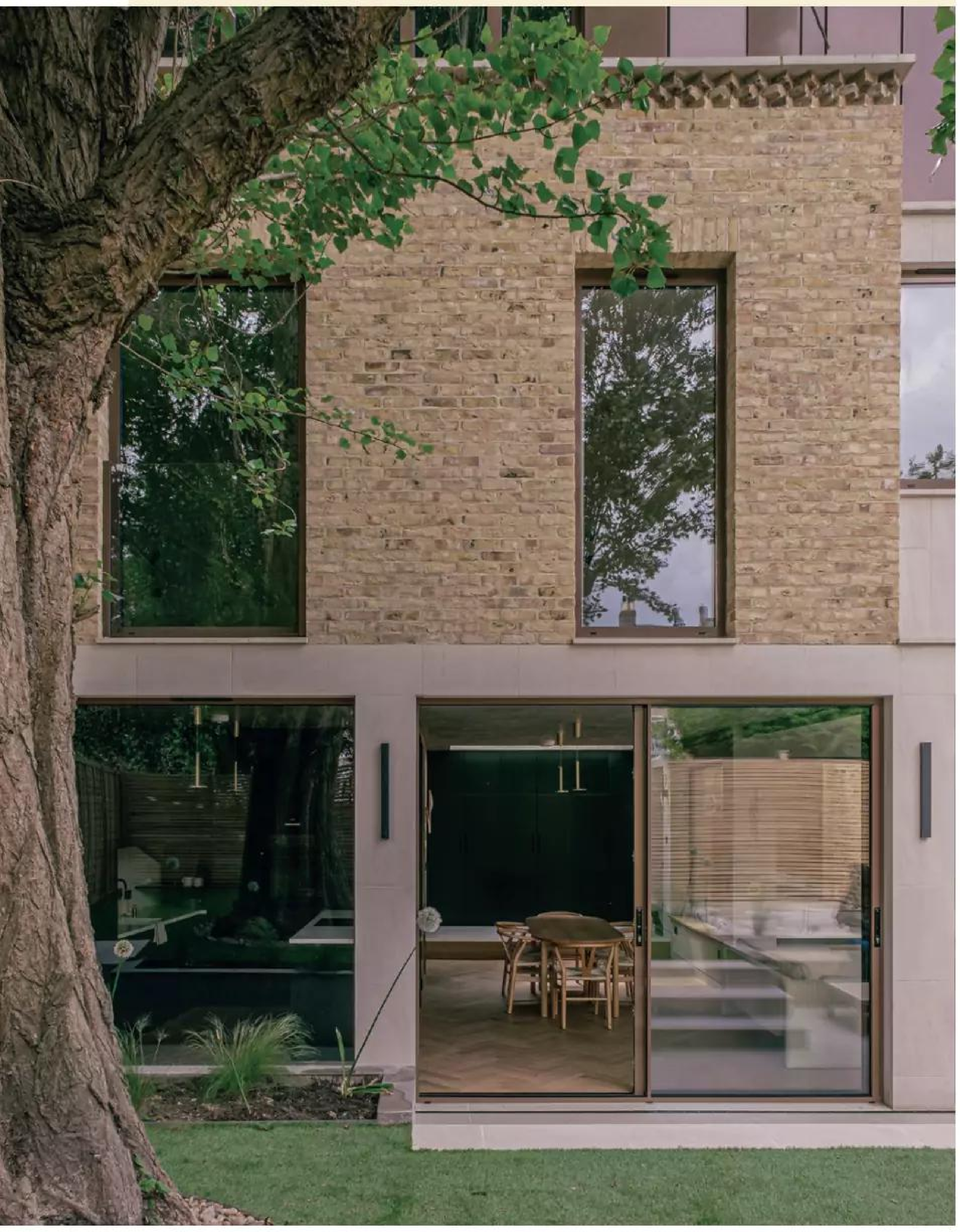
HOUSE NEXT DOOR

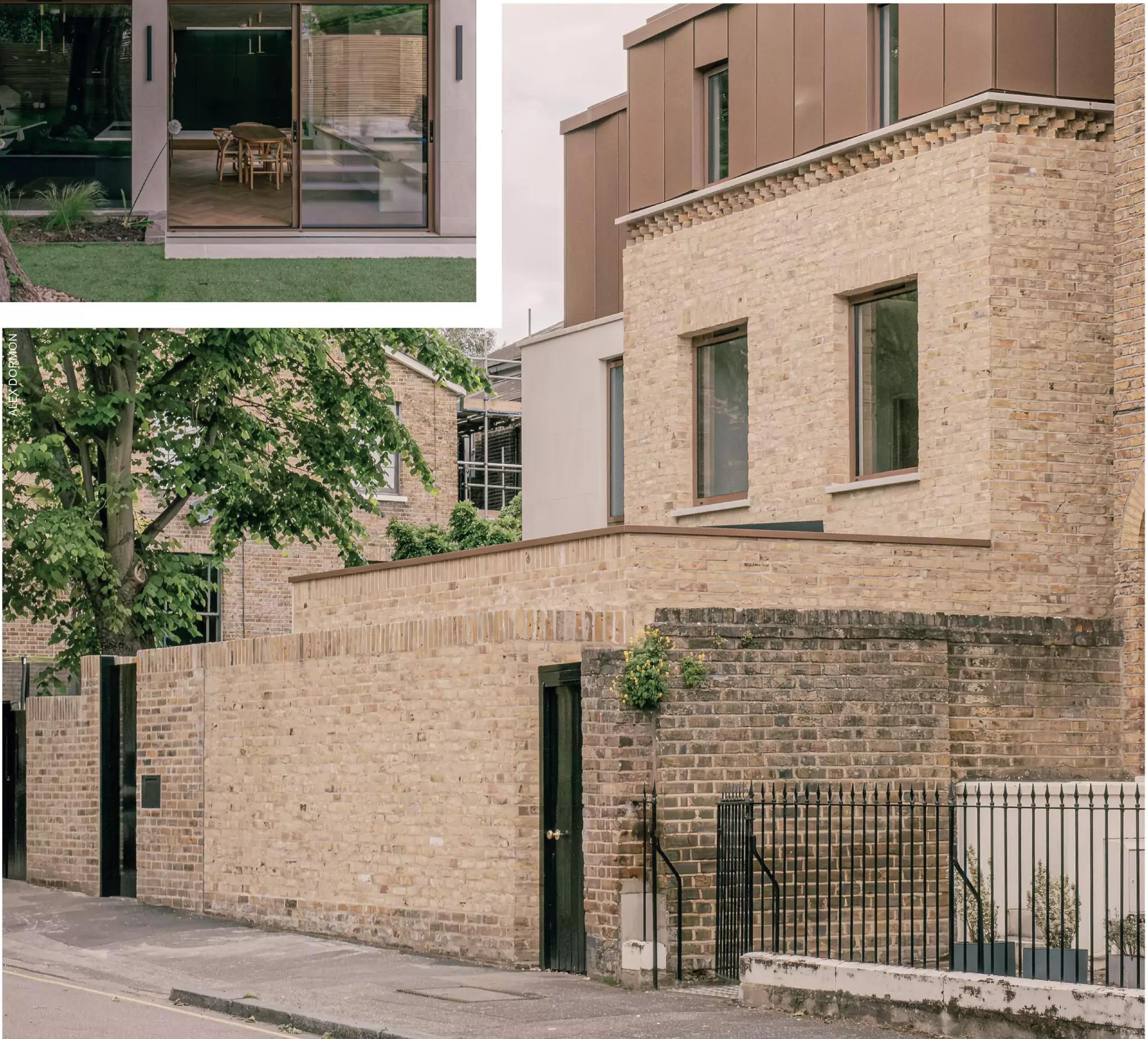
This family of four approached Matthew Giles Architects to help them extend, remodel and completely refurbish their dilapidated Edwardian home. The design brief embraced an entire exterior overhaul, adopting a light, white brick facade to replace the previously rendered surface, while reestablishing the house's architectural presence. A textured limewash process was used over the brick face to create a unified, monolithic appearance. You can read the full story behind this renovation project in an upcoming issue of Build It. **(www.matthewgilesarchitects.com)**

LIGHT TOUCHES

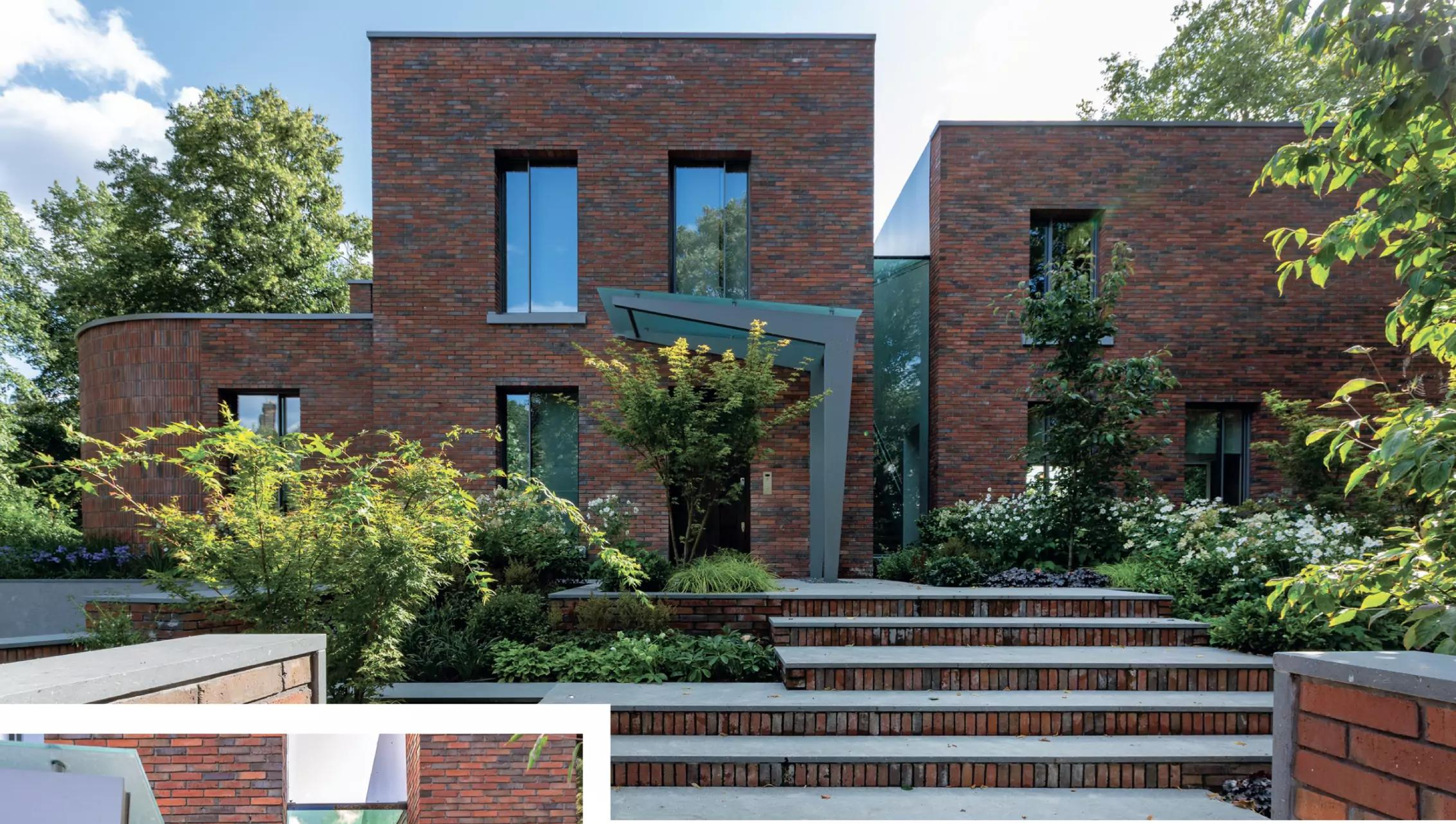
This new build home by Mailen Design sits in the heart of Blackheath, south east London. Inspired by mews houses, the modern property pays homage to the surrounding Victorian homes, with a recessed first and second storey that aligns with the adjacent properties. The stepped facade consists of London stock brickwork and pre-cast stone, with ornamental angled brick detailing that calls back to the area's architectural language. **(www.mailendesign.com)**



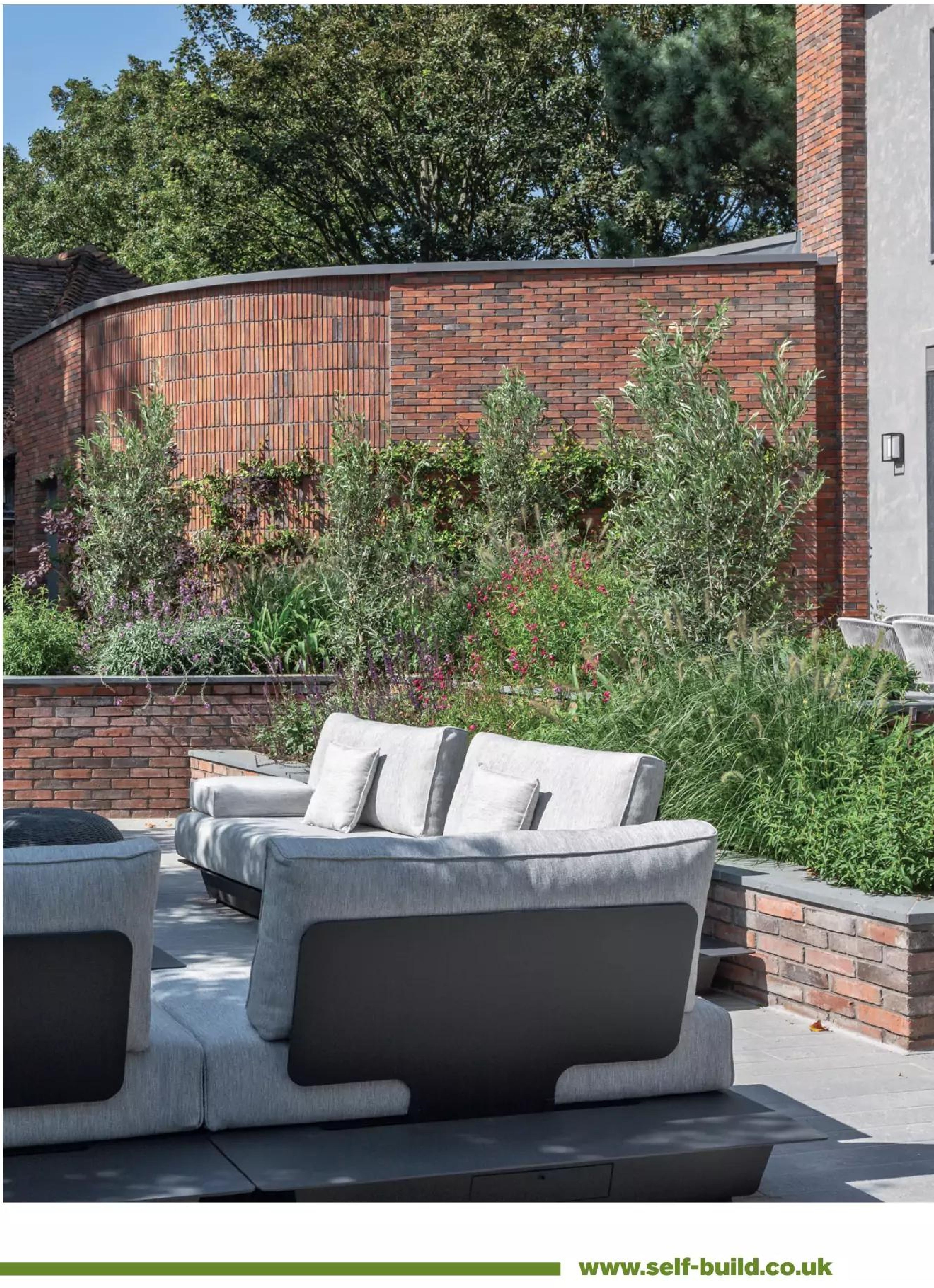




ALEX DORMON

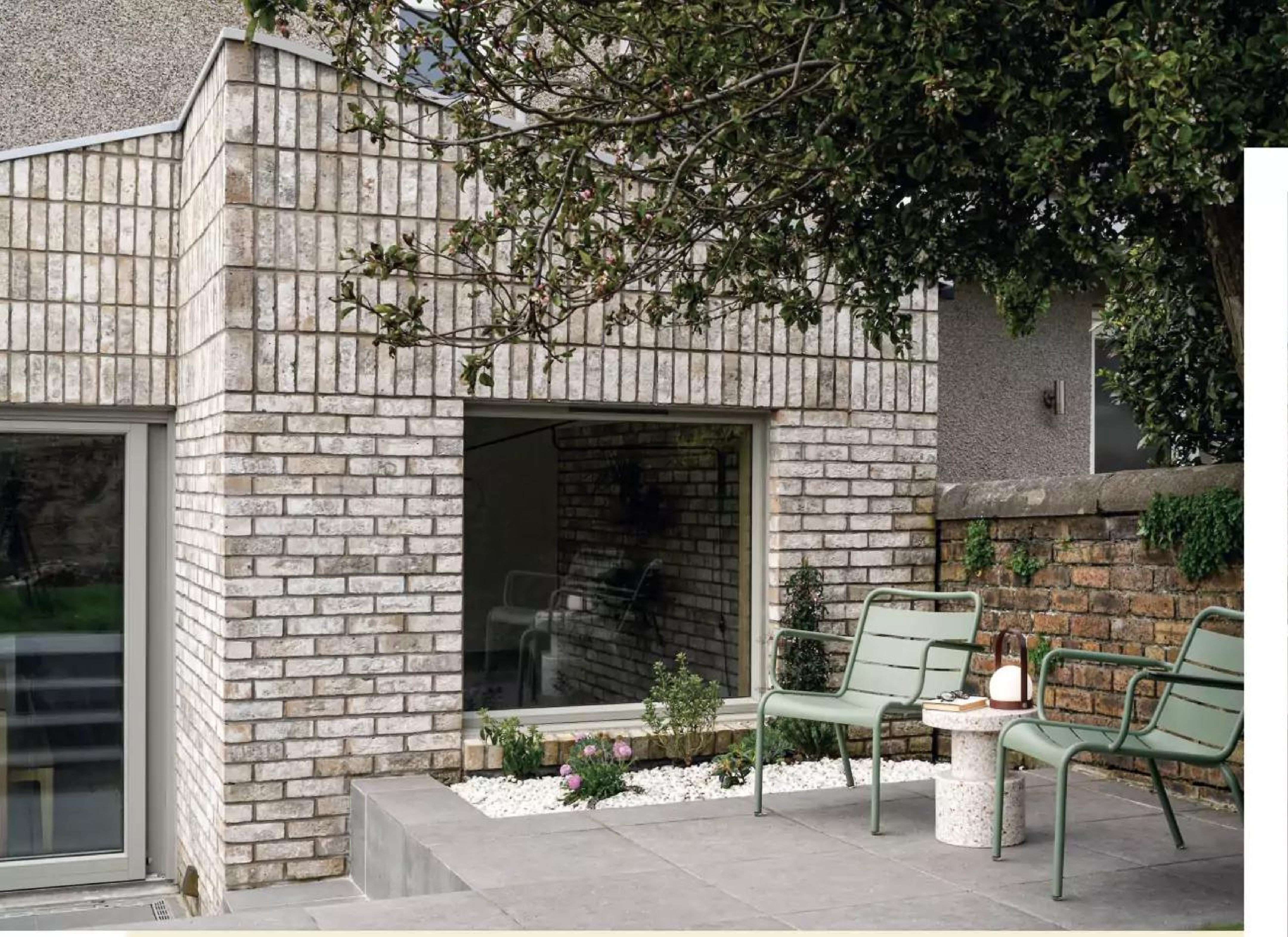


GRAHAM GAUNT



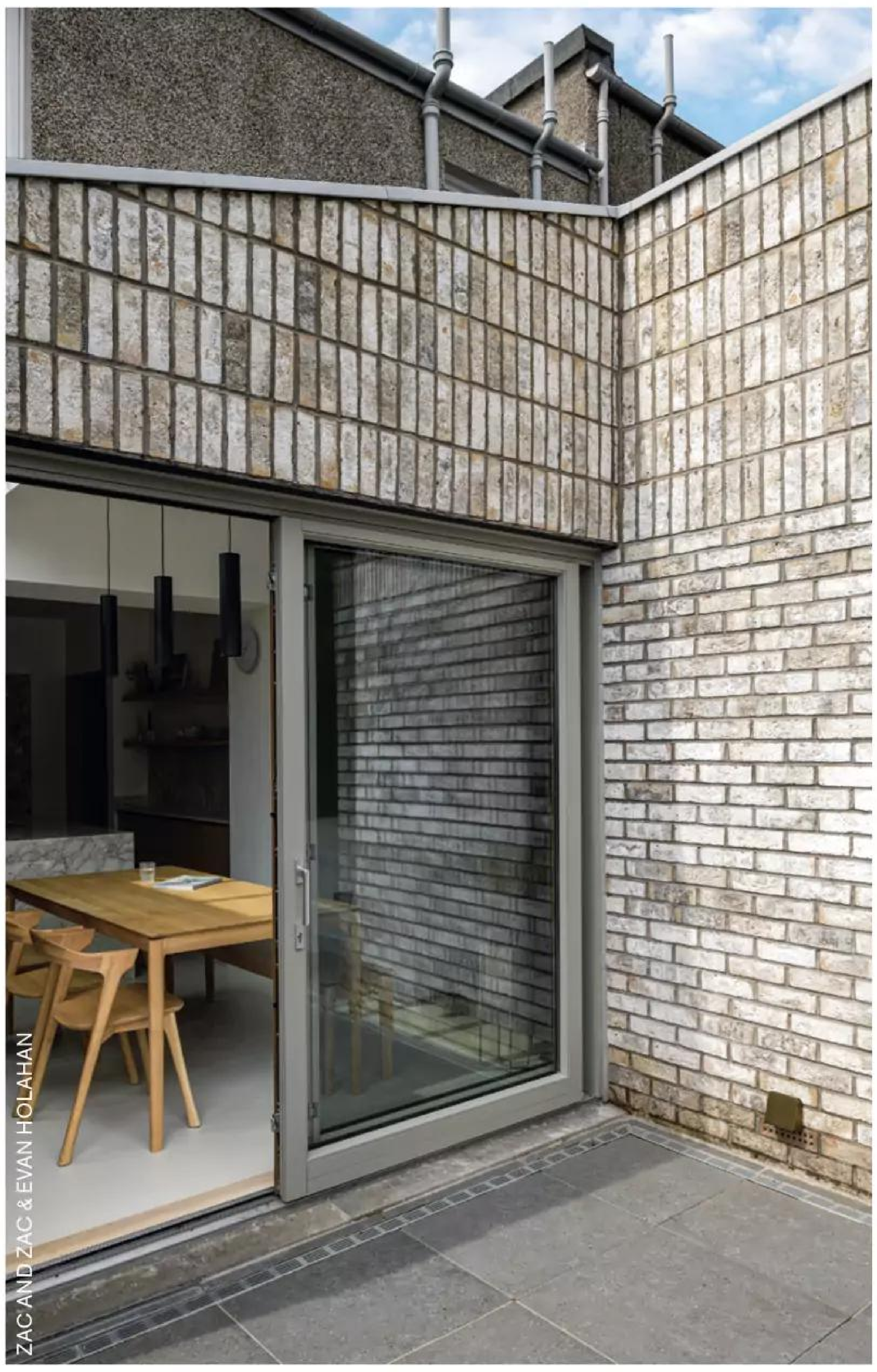
BENDING THE RULES

Located in a conservation area, this project by Studio M R involved the demolition of a period-style, Neo-Georgian dwelling, rebuilding a modern house in its place. The new home's design embraces traditional red brickwork, with linear, long-format units used to accentuate the horizontal proportioning of the mass of the building. The same bricks have been used vertically in a stacked soldier pattern, creating a distinctive finish on the exterior's curved sections. **(www.studiomr.co.uk)**

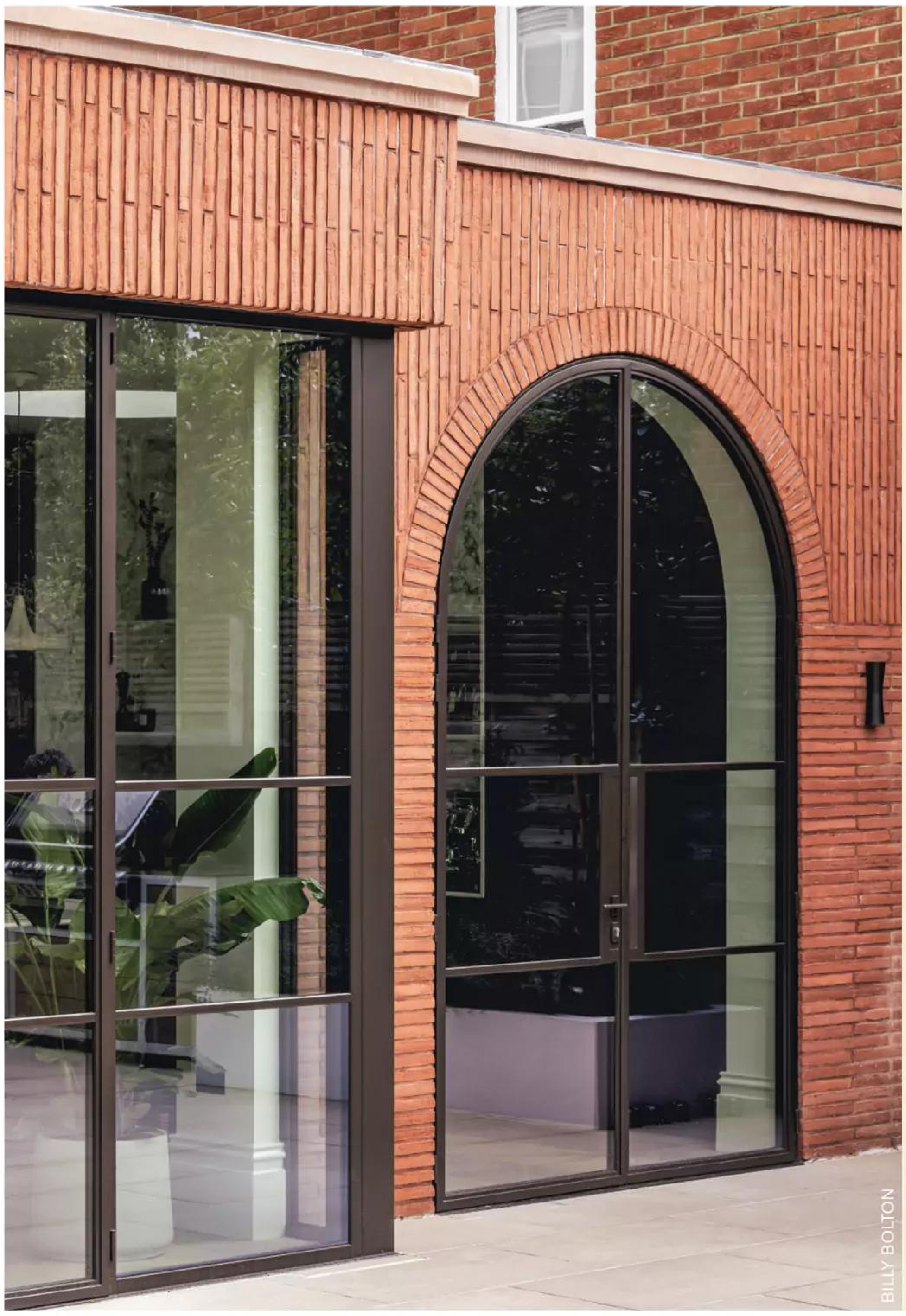


BRICK BY BRICK

Pend transformed this tired terraced house in Clermiston, nestled in the quiet suburbs of Edinburgh, to create a light-filled, dynamic home for a young family to grow into. Thoughtful reconfiguration and the addition of a rear extension work together to deliver a warm, inviting home, tailored to meet the needs of a busy family. Buff-toned Marziale brick was carefully selected to harmonise the extension with the existing structure, minimising visual contrast. The brick provides a subtle bridge between the red brick boundary walls and the original house's beige pebbledash rear elevation. **(www.pendarchitects.com)**



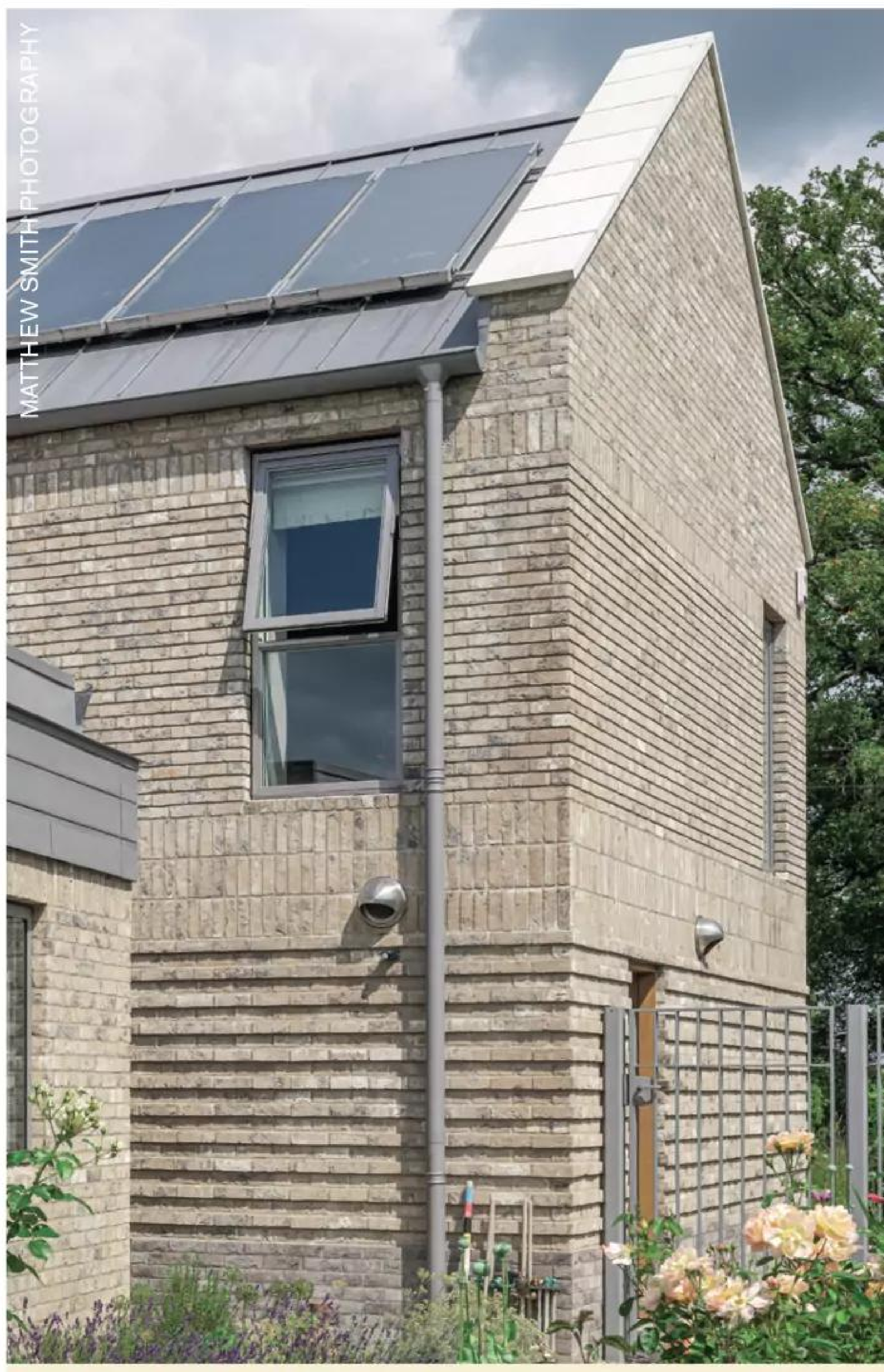
ZAC AND ZAC & EVAN HOLAHAN



BILLY BOLTON

NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Sketch Architects are the brains behind this ground floor renovation and extension to an early 20th-century house in a South West London conservation area. The scheme involved extending out to the rear to preserve valuable space in the garden, while remodelling the majority of the floorplan to create a new series of light-filled, well-connected rooms. The brand new addition has been finished with red handmade bricks, laid both horizontally and vertically, beautifully framing the extension's curved glazing. **(www.sketch-architects.co.uk)**



MATTHEW SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

YOUR FAQs ANSWERED CHOOSING THE RIGHT BRICKS

EMMA PERKIN from Emil Eve Architects takes a look at the different options on offer and which might be best suited to your project

Q What are handmade bricks & when do they work best?

This type of brick is hand-thrown using the traditional mould-cast method, which means that every brick unit will be slightly different – ensuring a natural, effortless charm. Another equally characterful option is waterstruck brick, which we use a lot in our projects – again, the manufacturing process introduces texture and variation. Both types can produce fantastic results with a real feeling of craft and tactility compared to machine-made (wirecut) bricks, which are much more consistent in appearance.

Q What are reclaimed bricks & how can you find quality units?

Reclaimed bricks can be a great option for those looking for something similar to their existing brickwork, while adopting a sustainable approach to reusing materials. The colour of bricks can vary depending on the clay type in the area – so approaching local reclamation yards can be a good place to start. You should check if the bricks still have mortar on them, as if this is cement (rather than lime) it could damage the bricks when removing.

Q What are brick slips & what are the benefits of using them as a exterior cladding material?

They are specially manufactured clay tiles that have the proportions, colour and surface texture of brick units. They are often used as a cladding material when cost or other factors (such as construction method) mean that using actual bricks isn't a practical or feasible option. When detailed and installed well, they can look great and can be used to create a plethora of intricate patterns that are much harder to achieve with whole brick units.

Q Should I match the type of brick to the surrounding architecture or my existing home's exterior?

When designing a contemporary addition to an existing house, we will often look to use a brick that complements the tone of the existing structure, but doesn't match exactly. For example, we like to use a soft, sandy-toned finish next to a yellow London stock brick. As well as the colour, you need to consider the texture and also the size/proportion of the units. Again, you can choose to match, complement or completely contrast these design elements. There are so many options with bricks, it is well worth doing some research and looking at nearby properties – get hold of samples and hold them up next to the existing house to see how they look and feel in person.

ALL IN THE DETAILS

Cocoon Architects designed this low-energy, light-filled home in Suffolk for a couple that wanted an adaptable, healthy space. The highly-insulated timber frame build takes inspiration from traditional Suffolk long houses, with a simple, elongated form that features areas of soft-toned, textural brickwork for visual interest. To the rear, a single-storey zone with wide spans of sliding glazed doors help connect the home to its rural surroundings. **(www.cocoonarchitects.co.uk)**

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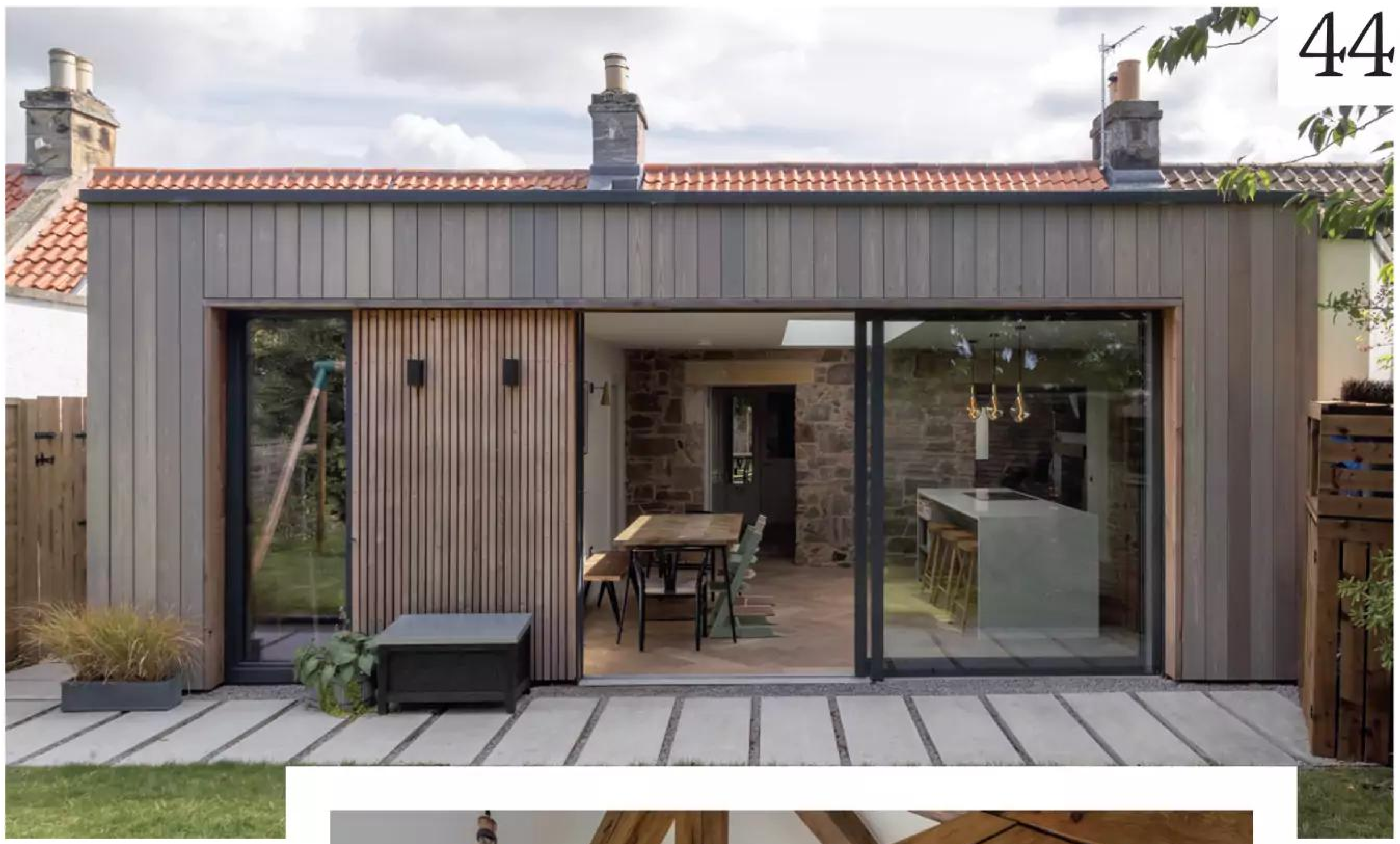
44

36

26

26 **MID-CENTURY MAGIC**
In search of more space for their growing family, Claire and Chris Lunt renovated and extended an unloved period home to create their dream space on a budget

36 **BARN LIFE**
Thanks to a change in planning law, Anthony and Alison Goodey were able to build their ideal, oak-framed barn-style home in Essex

44 **OLD MEETS NEW**
Cafe owners Julia and Rowan Walker created a sleek, modern extension that complements their traditional 19th century cottage in East Lothian

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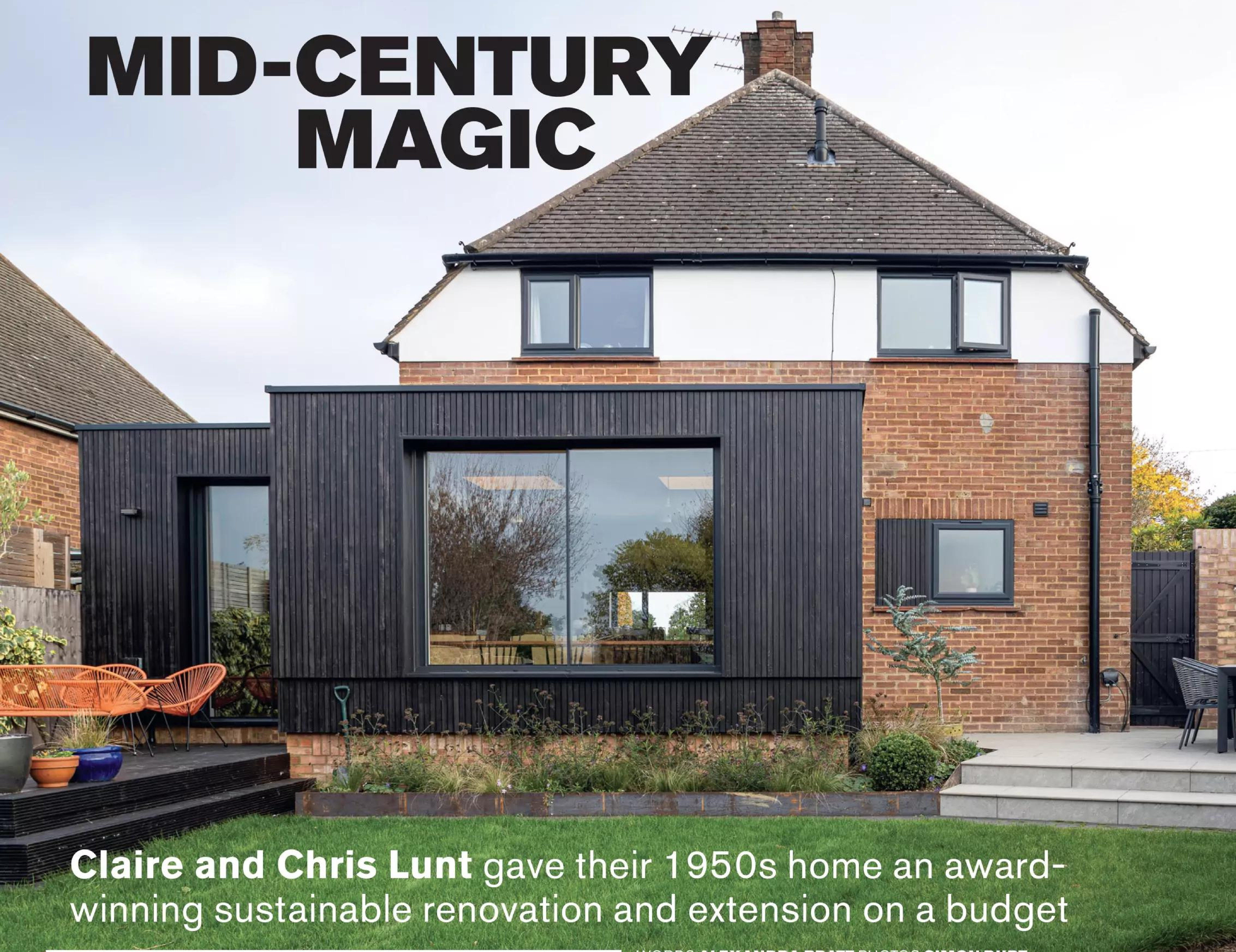
MID-CENTURY MAGIC



Claire and Chris Lunt gave their 1950s home an award-winning sustainable renovation and extension on a budget

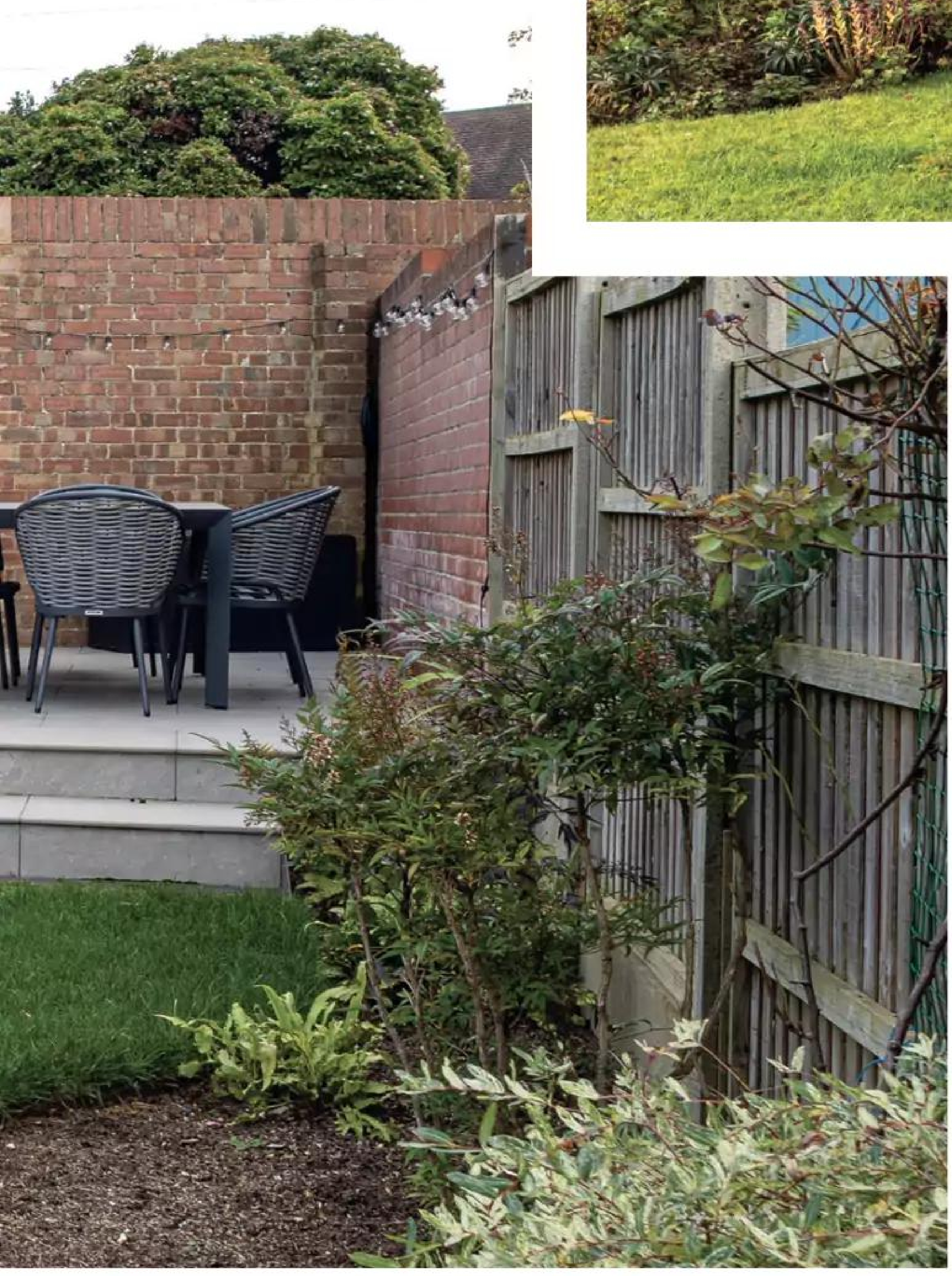
WORDS **ALEXANDRA PRATT** PHOTOS **SIMON BURT**

Claire Lunt instantly fell in love with the possibility of renovating a shabby, ex-rental, 1956 detached property. "But I had to spend time convincing my husband, Chris," she says, as she could see its potential as a place for their young family to grow. The location was ideal, too – close to Letchworth Garden City with views to the Chiltern Hills.

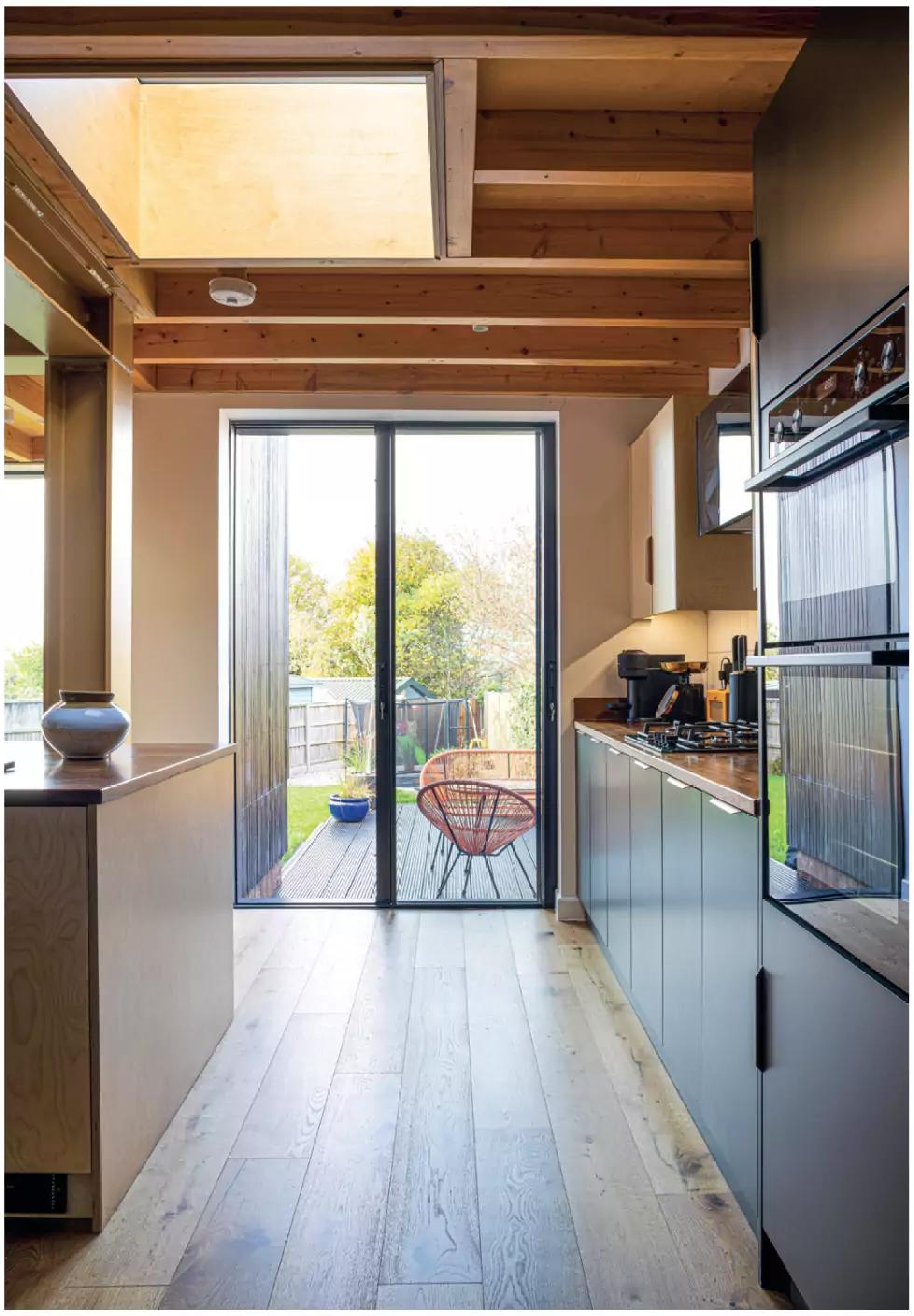
Although the couple knew they wanted to make substantial improvements to the property, Chris and Claire – who confess to being obsessed with home renovation TV shows – admit that they probably had a somewhat unrealistic view of the process. Once the purchase was complete, they expected to live in their house for six months before starting work, but finding the right architect, a main contractor and getting planning approval proved more challenging. Plus, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, increasing costs and timelines.

"We were both working at the dining room table, and one had to leave if the other had an important call," says Chris. "But we knew we wanted something a little bit different," says Claire. Their priorities were an open-plan kitchen, dining and living space, a second shower room and office area, all with tough sustainability criteria. Initially, the couple considered putting a two-storey extension onto the back of the house, which benefits from a long garden. "We met several architects who suggested standard

The new extension has transformed the connection between the house and garden, by making the outdoor space more accessible and showcasing the rural views



Right: The new deck, accessed directly from the kitchen, makes the outside space more enjoyable to use



FACT FILE

NAMES Chris & Claire Lunt

OCCUPATIONS Programme manager & buyer

LOCATION Hertfordshire

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation & extension

PROJECT ROUTE Architect & main contractor, with some DIY & sub-contractors

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame

HOUSE SIZE 150m² incl extension (97m²)

PROJECT COST £180,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,200

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED July 2021

BUILDING WORK TOOK Five months

extensions, then we found Michael Collins, and we loved his vision," say the couple. "We spent a lot of time talking with him about how we live in the house, and as a result began to think differently about the design, realising that the extra bedroom for occasional guests, which we had initially envisioned, wasn't necessary. At the same time, we had to face the reality of our budget constraints."

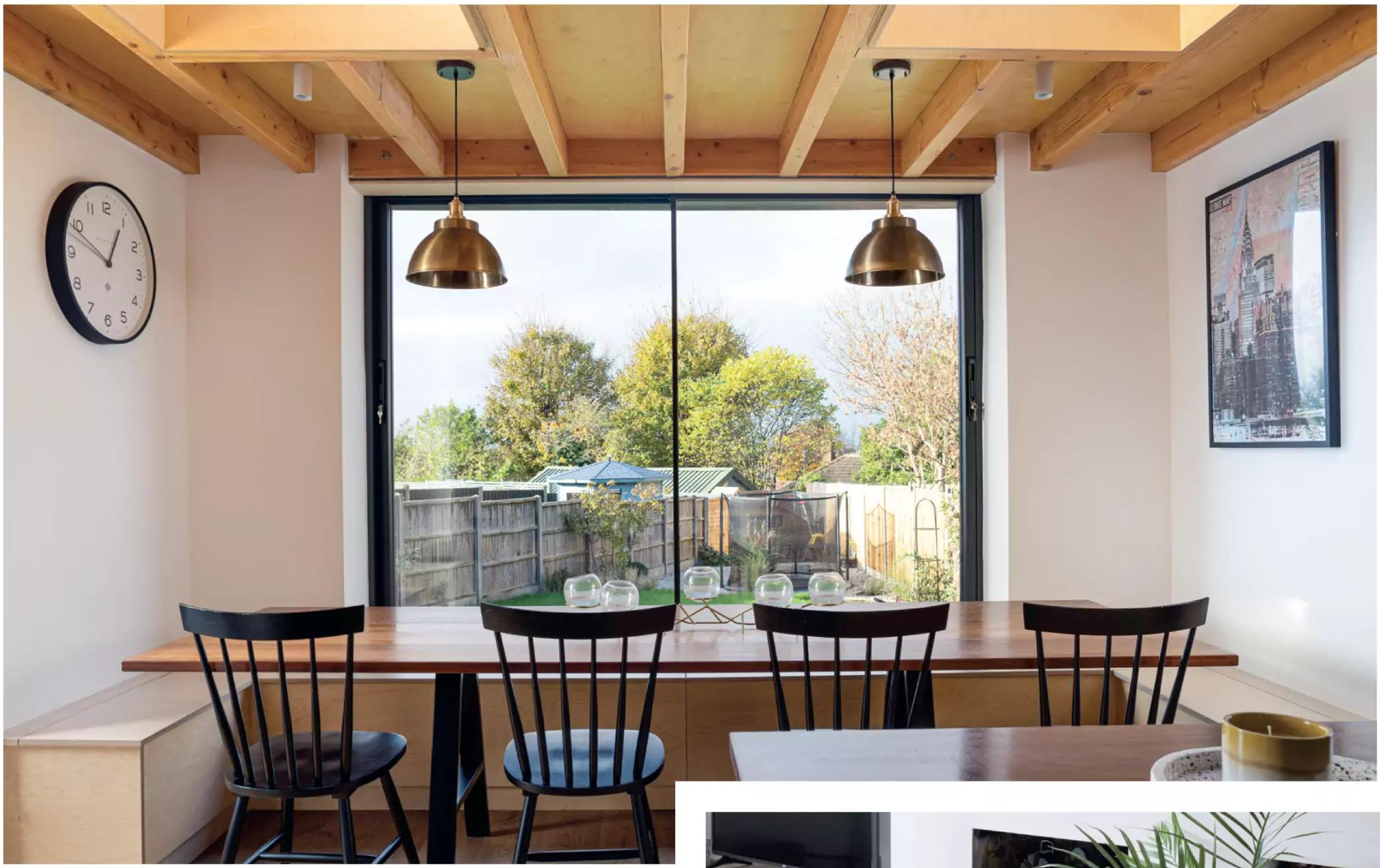
The result is a quietly luxurious home, following a low-carbon refit. A contemporary single-storey rear extension provides all that open-plan living space they craved. The new living areas are light,

spacious and packed with character thanks to the couple's choice of materials and considered pops of colour – all completed for an impressive £180,000. The stunning project won the regional RIBA Hertfordshire Award for Best Small Works back in 2022.

Key design choices

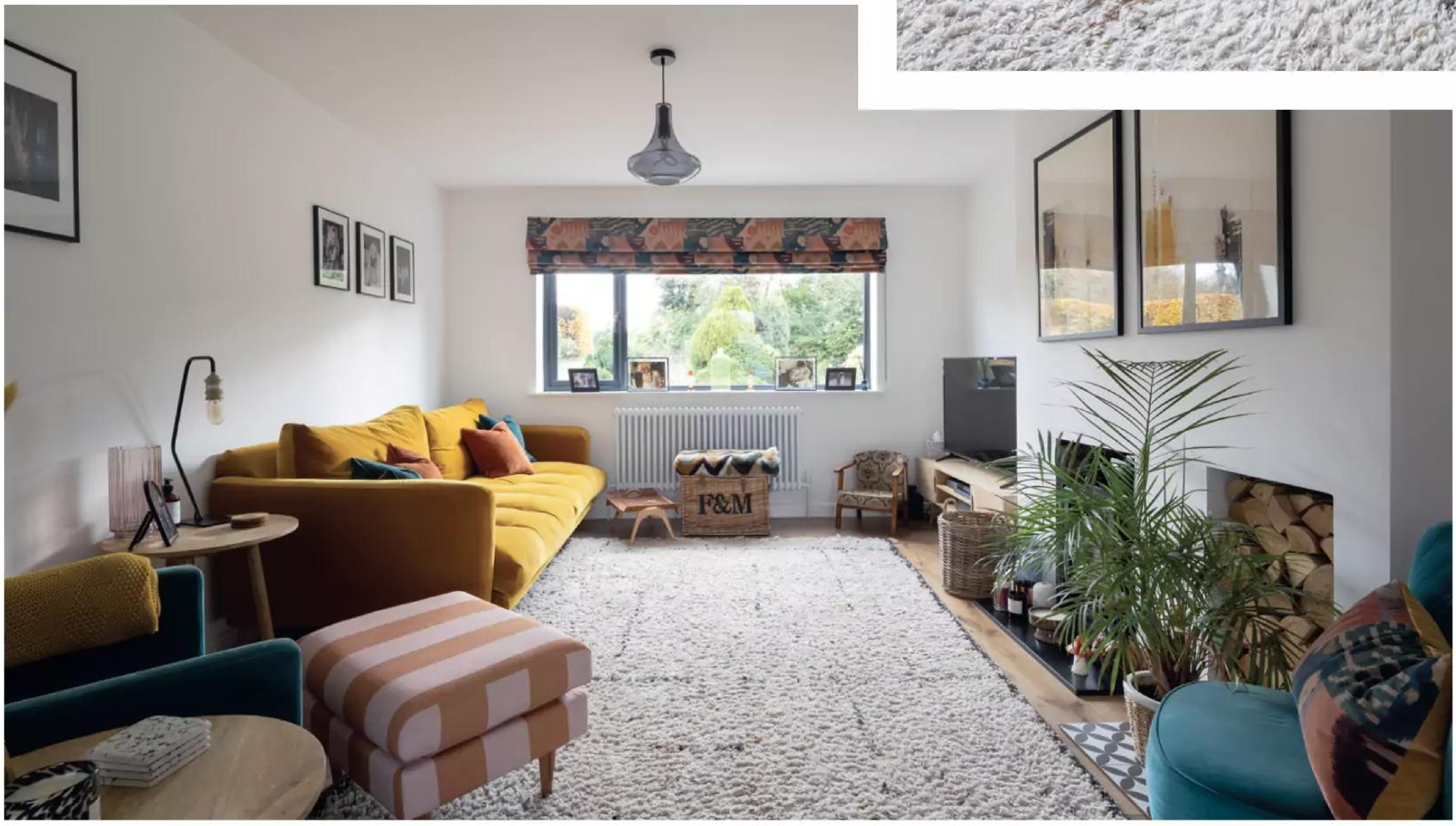
Getting to the finish line proved challenging, yet, after waiting for Michael to become available, Claire and Chris' plans were approved fairly quickly. Finding a main contractor wasn't straightforward. "When we discussed it in 2020, four or five firms were interested, but when we were ready to start, everyone was too busy, or their costs had doubled thanks to Covid and the demand for home improvements," says Chris. "It didn't help that our project wasn't

The innovative new extension is a shining example of what can be achieved on a modest budget. The exposed steel pillars and joists reveal the construction details of the addition, which is largely made from timber, complete with aluminium-framed glazing



considered a standard extension, despite using typical materials, just in a different way," adds Claire. Their architect, Michael, came to their rescue, introducing the pair to a new building partnership, Ardent Construction. The project specification was developed on an open book basis and the contracting team became part of the design process, with details evolving throughout construction. "It was a risk, but we had an amazing experience. They were the only builders we found who shared their spreadsheet, critical path and work plan," says Claire. "We're both very logical and we loved that."

The budget certainly evolved throughout the project, too, but when costs went up in one area, Claire and Chris were able to quickly adjust elsewhere. "It was stressful, but we both enjoyed the challenge," they agree. The couple had strong sustainable ambitions



Top: Claire and Chris chose to have dual-purpose built-in seating in the window, with a glazed door opening onto the garden from the kitchen

Above & left: The couple renovated the entire house, adding insulation under the floor and replastering all the walls. They also decorated on a DIY basis. "There's a lot of colour in this house," says Claire

for the renovation, although these pivoted when confronted with the costs. The house has been upgraded throughout with low-energy adaptations, such as new windows and doors. The upstairs bathroom changed from a separate toilet and bath into one space. Downstairs, they carved out a new shower room from an unused storage area and moved the new boiler to the attic; a temporary measure until they can budget for solar heating or an air source heat pump. "I was very ambitious about relying on solar heating, and although I wanted to go this way, I knew that the UK weather may not allow it," says Chris.

The most significant upgrade to the property is the spectacular new extension, which runs across the back of the house, wrapping around the side to include some space from the garage. The addition was built using sustainably-sourced timber framing and clad in contemporary larch, creating a modern yet sympathetic structure. Claire and Chris stained the cladding themselves, working on sections indoors at weekends and in the evenings. A sedum roof was installed, as well as aluminum-framed double glazing, that contribute to the building's energy efficiency. Origin artisan sliders from CS Windows, with low-emissivity glass, provide excellent thermal performance by reflecting heat back into the room. The sliders are engineered with U-values down to 1.4 W/m^{2}K, exceeding UK Building Regulations requirements at the time of the project.

"The layout of the extension was our best decision," says Chris. "It is very sociable. We can cook, entertain and there's lots of storage. We also have a huge space for dining; we even had 14 guests for Christmas dinner!" Now the former garage is, in part, incorporated into the open-plan kitchen, not only are the steel beams celebrated, but the couple revealed many traditional finishes,

Above: Initially prioritising space above all else, the couple rethought their plans when faced with the costs involved and ultimately decided that three bedrooms would be sufficient

WE LEARNED...

BUDGETING IS CRUCIAL, as is choosing where to spend your money. While keeping costs down was important, we regret scrimping on bathroom fittings.

CONSIDER THE SUPPLIER and quality when looking at items such as flooring, handles and key finishes to ensure best results. Plus, take expert advice wherever you can.

WORK WITH LOCAL DESIGNERS. Our architect, Michael Collins, had worked with our local authority on a few previous projects and this gave us a really valuable leg up when seeking approval.

Above & right: Carefully selected pops of colour and pattern feature throughout the interior scheme, filling the home with vibrancy

embracing exposed joists, too. The large, thermally-efficient windows maximise passive solar gains and fill the family-friendly space with light and access to surrounding views. Rooflights also drop light into the room where it joins the original building. The warm wood interiors contrast with the dark-clad exterior finish, which references tarred local agricultural sheds. The extension is complete with a brick plinth and zinc rainwater goods.

Inside, steel uprights mark where the exterior wall was previously. "It shows how the building has been constructed," says Chris. "It's a great feature." The open-plan space uses several different timbers, including oak, iroko and birch ply. The raw, natural look was something Claire looked to incorporate throughout the design scheme. The building has a mid-century style and she felt that ply and solid timber would be in keeping with the feel of the house.

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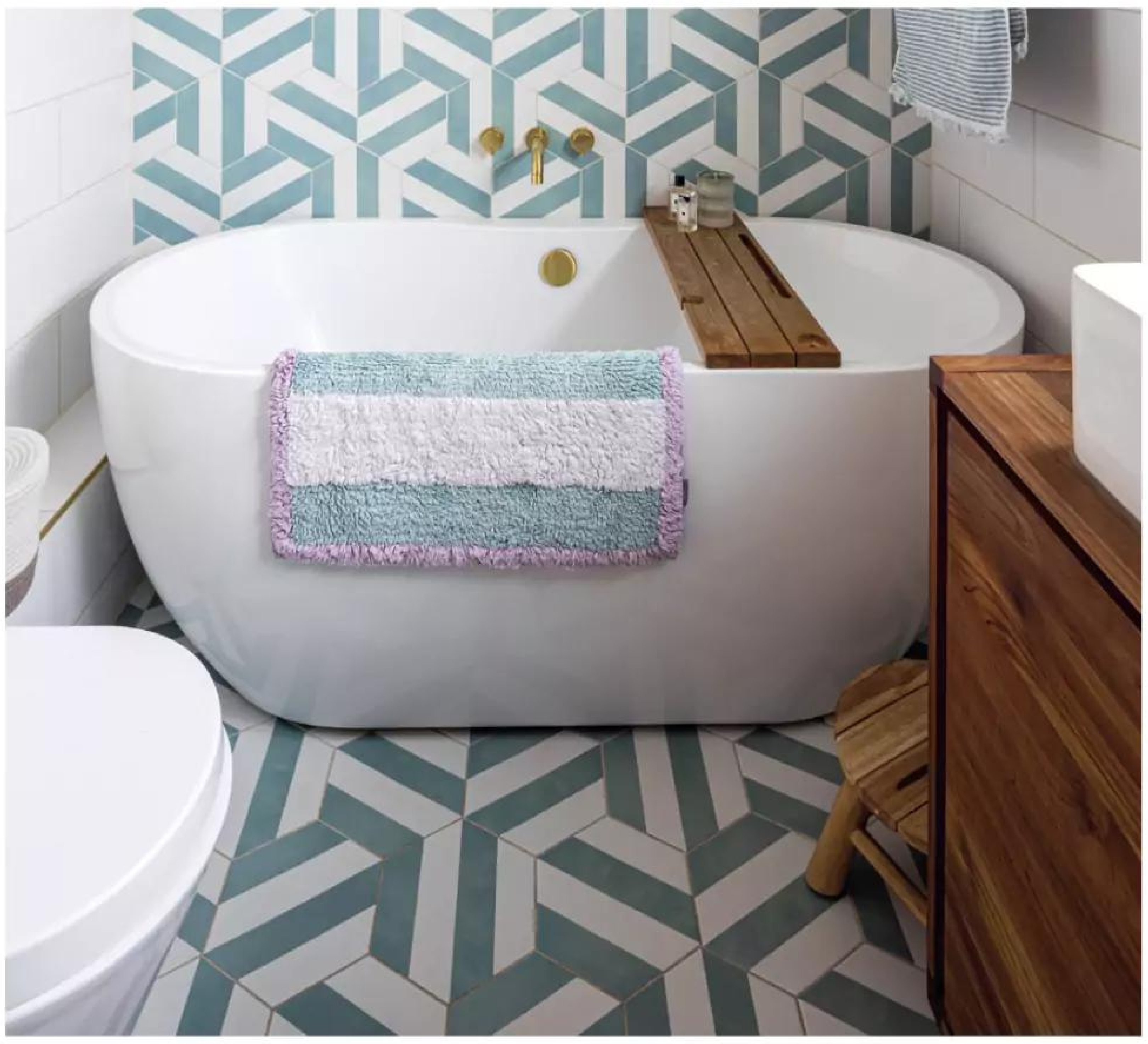
One of the first completed stages of the renovation, Chris and Claire combined a separate toilet and bath into a single room, retaining one of the two windows. They chose bold green and gold as the dominant colors



Overcoming the hurdles

Inevitably, there were some challenges along the way. Claire and Chris contributed some DIY labour throughout the project to keep costs down – doing the internal ripping out, oiling doors, decorating and finishing the deck. Yet when their window supplier called to say their frames had been manufactured in the wrong colour, the pair had to find a new supplier at short notice. This created an eight-week delay as the kitchen could not be fitted until the windows were in place. Another brief setback emerged when some plastic sewage piping had to be removed on the orders of a building inspector, who insisted on using traditional clay pipes.

Like so many couples in TV housebuilding documentaries, Claire became pregnant with their second child at the start of the building works, turning the project into a race against time before baby Alex arrived. The pair lived on site throughout, spending several months without a kitchen. For Claire, juggling pregnancy, caring for a toddler, and working full time was, unsurprisingly, incredibly challenging. "It was all worth it in the end, as the money we saved on renting meant we could have better quality fittings," she says.

Now their renovation and extension project is complete, it's no longer a segmented, dark space, but a light, interconnected home, better suited to family life. Chris is particularly pleased with the new multipurpose office, gym and spare room housed in the extension. "The space gets used on a daily basis," he says. "Unlike the spare bedroom we had initially planned for upstairs."

Finished just one month before their second child was born, Claire notes how much the new design has improved their lifestyle. "The house has gone from being pretty bog standard to one we can be immensely proud of." And the bonus? Now those tiny kitchen windows have been replaced, the family can see the Chilterns; a view they didn't know they had access to previously.

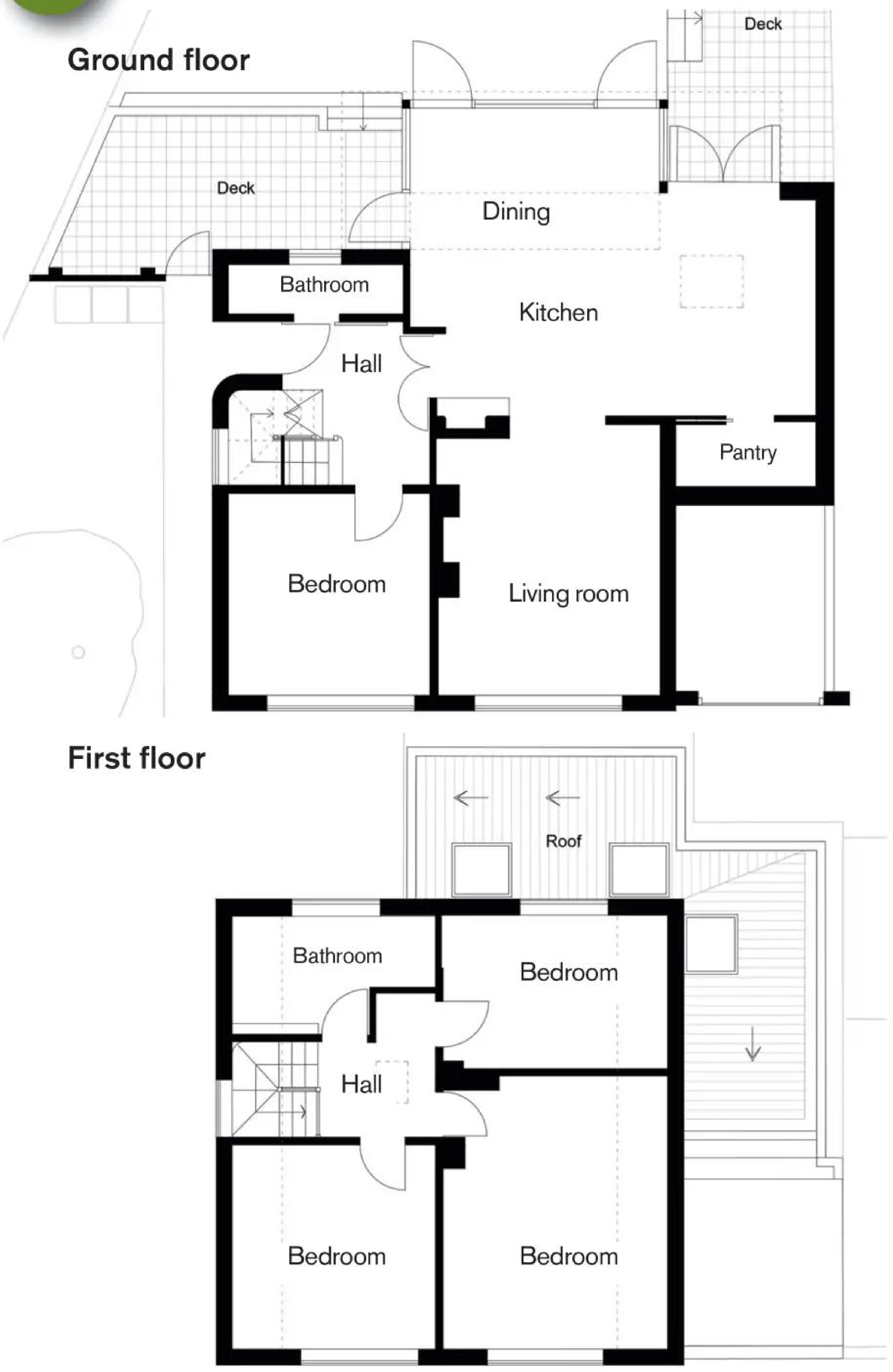
closer look

An innovative kitchen…

The centrepiece of the new extension, the kitchen, is key to the entire project. Originally, the couple wanted a recycled setup, but perhaps surprisingly, this was out of reach of their budget. Many second-hand kitchens were expensive originally and, when refitted, require substantial work to adapt to a new building. Instead, Chris and Claire opted for bespoke units from a local supplier. There's no MDF here; the carcasses are made from solid oak with birch ply doors and darker worktops, manufactured using the warm-toned hardwood Iroko. "We liked the material so much, we went out and bought steel legs for a dining table, also made from Iroko," says Chris. Along one side of the dining table, the seating is provided by more bespoke woodwork; a plywood bench, which doubles as storage and is designed to work with the home's mid-century design. Some cabinetry is painted in Farrow & Ball's Studio Green, while other sections have been left natural, as Claire wanted a mix of colours. This is further enhanced by the stunning accent colour, Indian Yellow (also Farrow & Ball), painted on the steel beams that mark the original wall between the garage and the kitchen.

Light & bright

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£333	28%	£50,000
Windows (extension only)	£200	17%	£30,000
New glazing (main house only)	£100	8%	£15,000
Trades	£87	7%	£13,000
Decking	£27	2%	£4,000
Internal joinery	£27	2%	£4,000
Heating	£53	5%	£8,000
Bathrooms	£100	8%	£15,000
Kitchen	£200	17%	£30,000
Flooring & decoration	£73	6%	£11,000
Grand total			**£180,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Michael Collins Architects** 07866 479770 www.michaelcollinsarchitects.com MAIN CONTRACTOR **Ardent Construction** www.ardent-construction.com INSULATION **Celotex** 01473 822093 www.celotex.co.uk ROOFING MEMBRANE **Sika sarnafil** 08081 410710 www.gbr.sika.com GLAZING **CS Windows** 01582 206223 www.cs-windows.co.uk ENGINEERED OAK FLOORING **The Floor Shop** 0800 849 2312 www.thefloorshop.co.uk KITCHEN **Moduu** www.moduuliving.co.uk PAINT **Farrow & Ball** 01202 876141 www.farrow-ball.com

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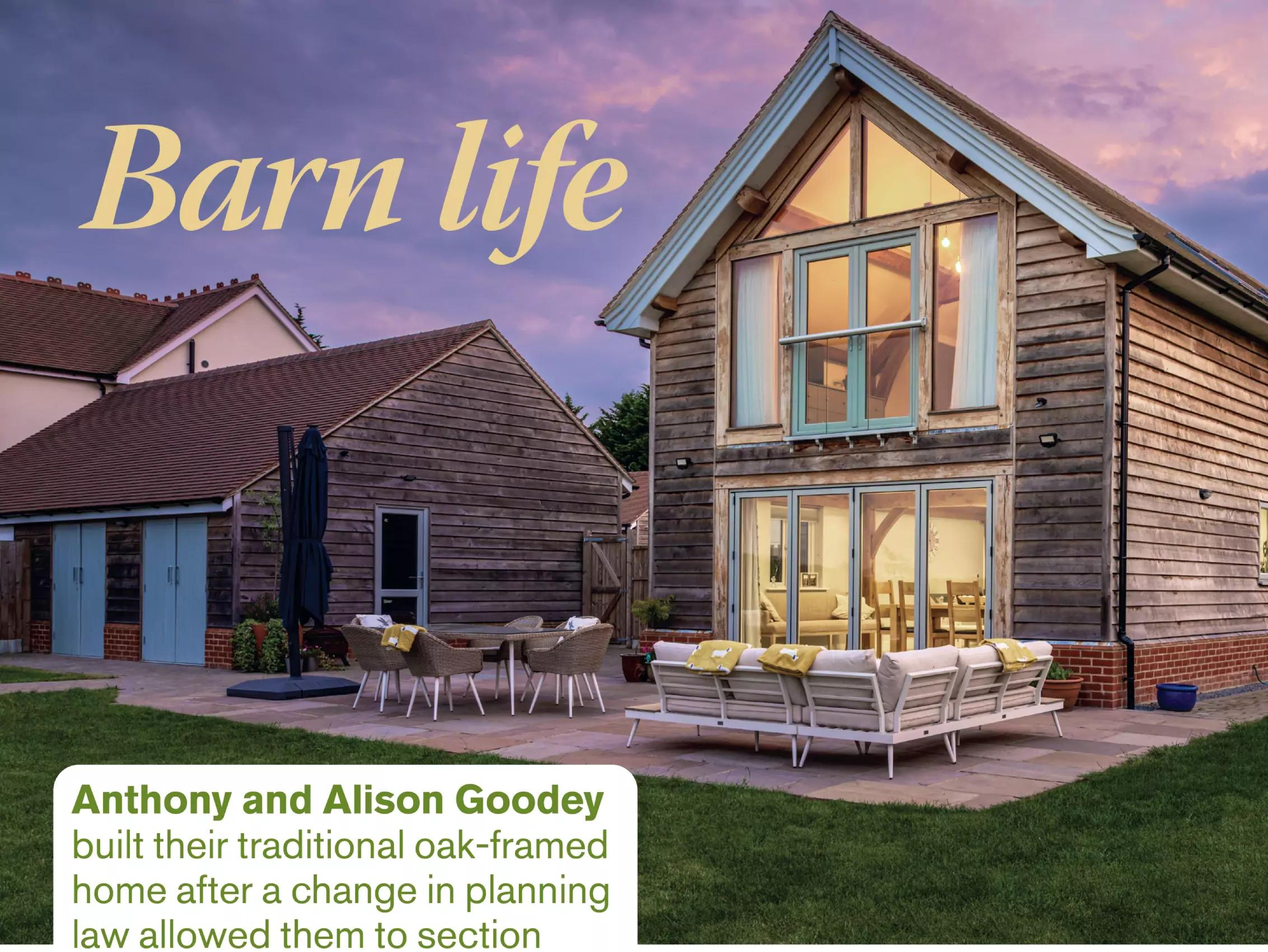


Barn life

Anthony and Alison Goodey built their traditional oak-framed home after a change in planning law allowed them to section off a piece of land belonging to their livery stable yard, bought some years before

WORDS **JANE CRITTENDEN** PHOTOS **NIKHILESH HAVAL**

Keen horse riders, Anthony and Alison Goodey bought a 50-acre livery yard and equestrian centre in Essex over 17 years ago after Anthony semi-retired from the family building business, Goodey Construction. During this time, the government relaxed planning laws around developing brownfield sites. This led the couple to wonder if they might be permitted to build houses on their land, including one for themselves to live in. "The livery yard had become a lot of work so we decided to downscale," says Anthony. "The development design philosophy was to create a typical farmyard scene that looked like the houses had always been there. For authenticity, they needed to vary in appearance, shape, size and construction, leading us to build a traditional, barn-style property, which became our new home."

The couple were living nearby in a 1960s chalet bungalow when they began developing their ideas, back in 2017. After earmarking several dilapidated outbuildings within a two-acre section of the livery yard and equestrian centre, they had a pre-planning meeting. "We walked around the site and the planning officer asked if we were going to convert or rebuild the outbuildings," says Anthony. "They were pretty run-down so we were relieved that the planners were on board with us knocking down and replacing them."

Obtaining planning approval

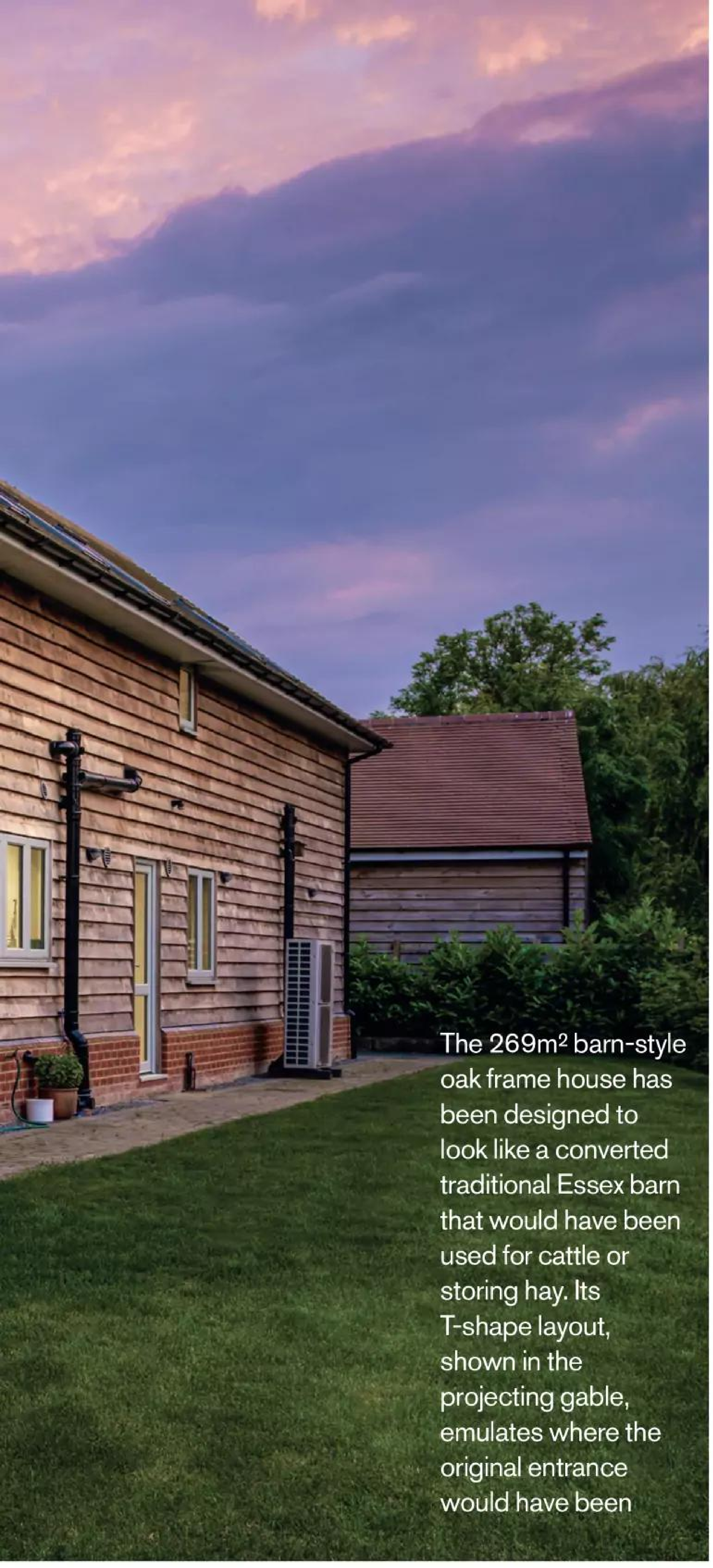
Anthony hired an architect he knew from previous commercial projects, and they worked through sketches for a traditional farmhouse, a pair of terraced cottages, a workshop and the couple's T-shaped barn-style home. At this stage, they didn't know which house would be theirs as it made sense to live in the last property to be built – but they had their eye on the Essex barn from the outset.

The properties needed to look like they'd been converted, with features in keeping with the local area. Anthony and Alison did their homework. "The local authority wanted all the properties to have character," says Anthony. "We researched local barn styles and took pictures. The planning officer showed me an Essex barn conversion they were working on to ensure we had the T-shape exactly right."

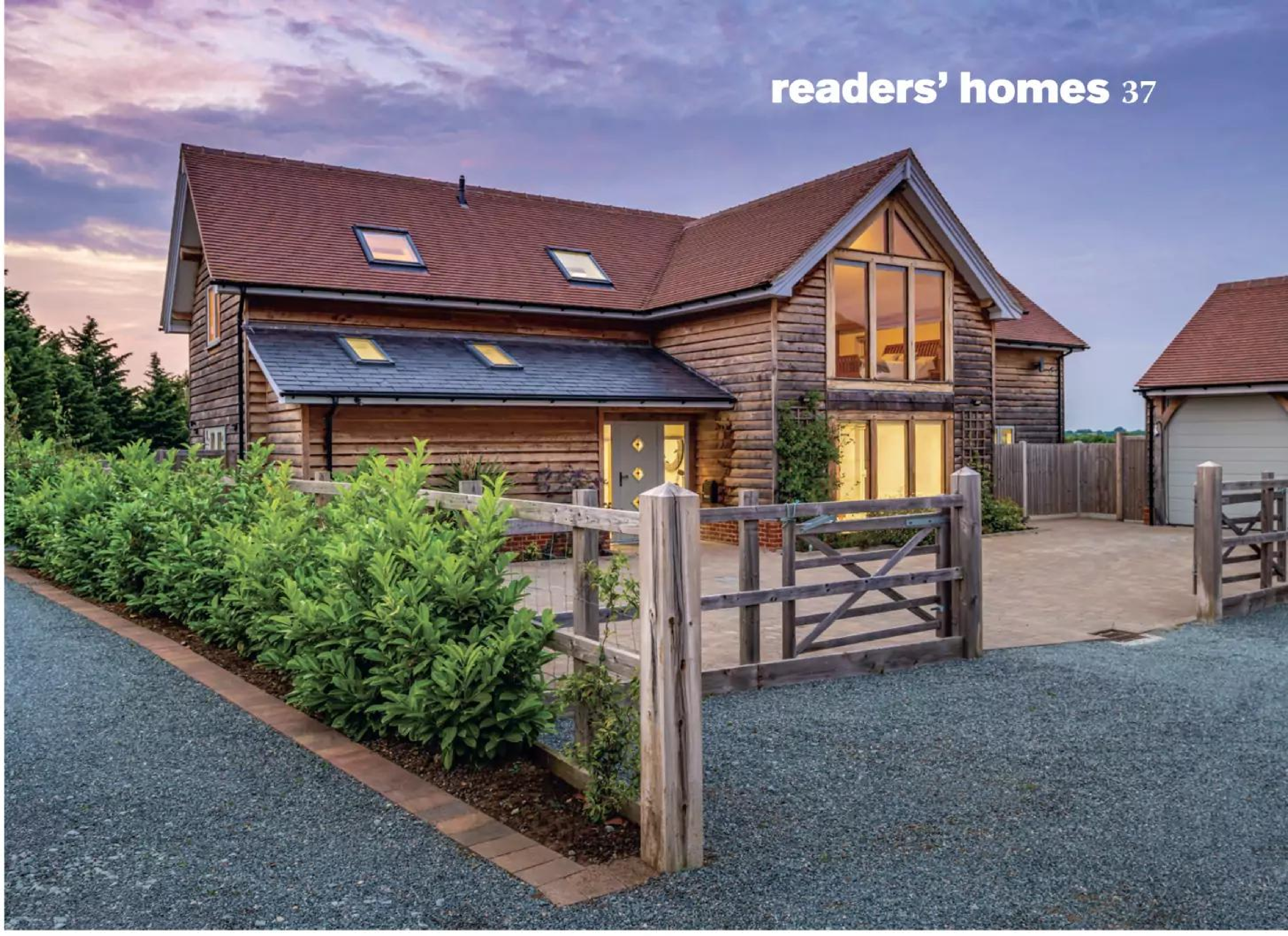
Anthony spent 16 months working through the designs and the complex planning application, commissioning surveys and reports for bats, drainage and traffic. Although the house is pretty much on the same footprint as one of the dilapidated outbuildings it replaced, the planners weren't concerned with its size. "They were more focused on the overall volume of the scheme, which couldn't exceed that of the old buildings," Anthony explains. "This gave us scope to make some of the properties larger or smaller than those they replaced."

Planning approval for the change of use from a livery and equestrian centre to residential was given in May 2018. However, the discharge of conditions (approval for smaller details) for landscaping and service routes continued through into March 2021.

Since the design objective was for each new property to look like converted original agricultural buildings, the construction method and external materials were equally important. "I settled on masonry



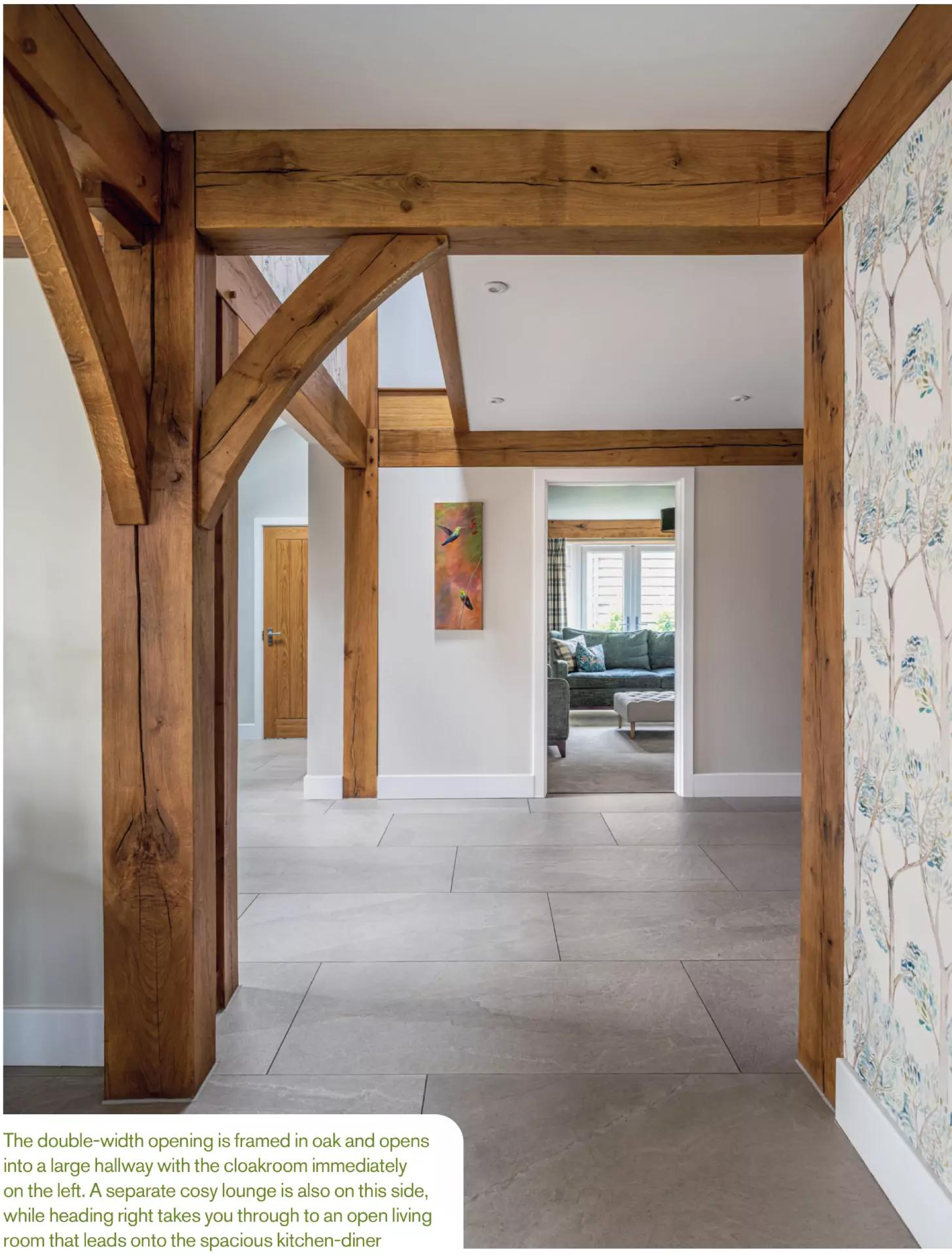
The 269m² barn-style oak frame house has been designed to look like a converted traditional Essex barn that would have been used for cattle or storing hay. Its T-shape layout, shown in the projecting gable, emulates where the original entrance would have been



for the farmhouse and cottages, but we didn't want to use a standard timber frame for the barns as it wouldn't give justice to the designs," explains Anthony. "That's when we started talking to oak frame companies. Although it wasn't the most cost-effective route, it helped that we already owned the land. Now we're really pleased we built with oak as the character in our home is amazing."

The oak frame design

Anthony approached three oak frame companies he found online, requesting a quote that included structural drawings for Building Regs. He also discussed bedroom sizes and ensuites. They each came back with proposals for how they would turn the approved barn designs into buildable oak frame properties. "We were looking at who could provide the best design and service, but I wasn't impressed with the rep from one company or the manufacturing process of another," says Anthony. "Welsh Oak Frame stood out. They were clear about why posts and beams needed to go where they'd placed them and were flexible about making changes; some others seemed to want the design their way or no way."



The double-width opening is framed in oak and opens into a large hallway with the cloakroom immediately on the left. A separate cosy lounge is also on this side, while heading right takes you through to an open living room that leads onto the spacious kitchen-diner

FACT FILE

NAMES Anthony & Alison Goodey

OCCUPATION Builder & equestrian yard manager

LOCATION Essex

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

PROJECT ROUTE Project managed & built by Anthony's family-owned construction company

METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION Oak frame with SIPs

HOUSE SIZE 269m²

PLOT SIZE 0.3 acres

PLOT COST Already owned

PROJECT COST £522,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,940

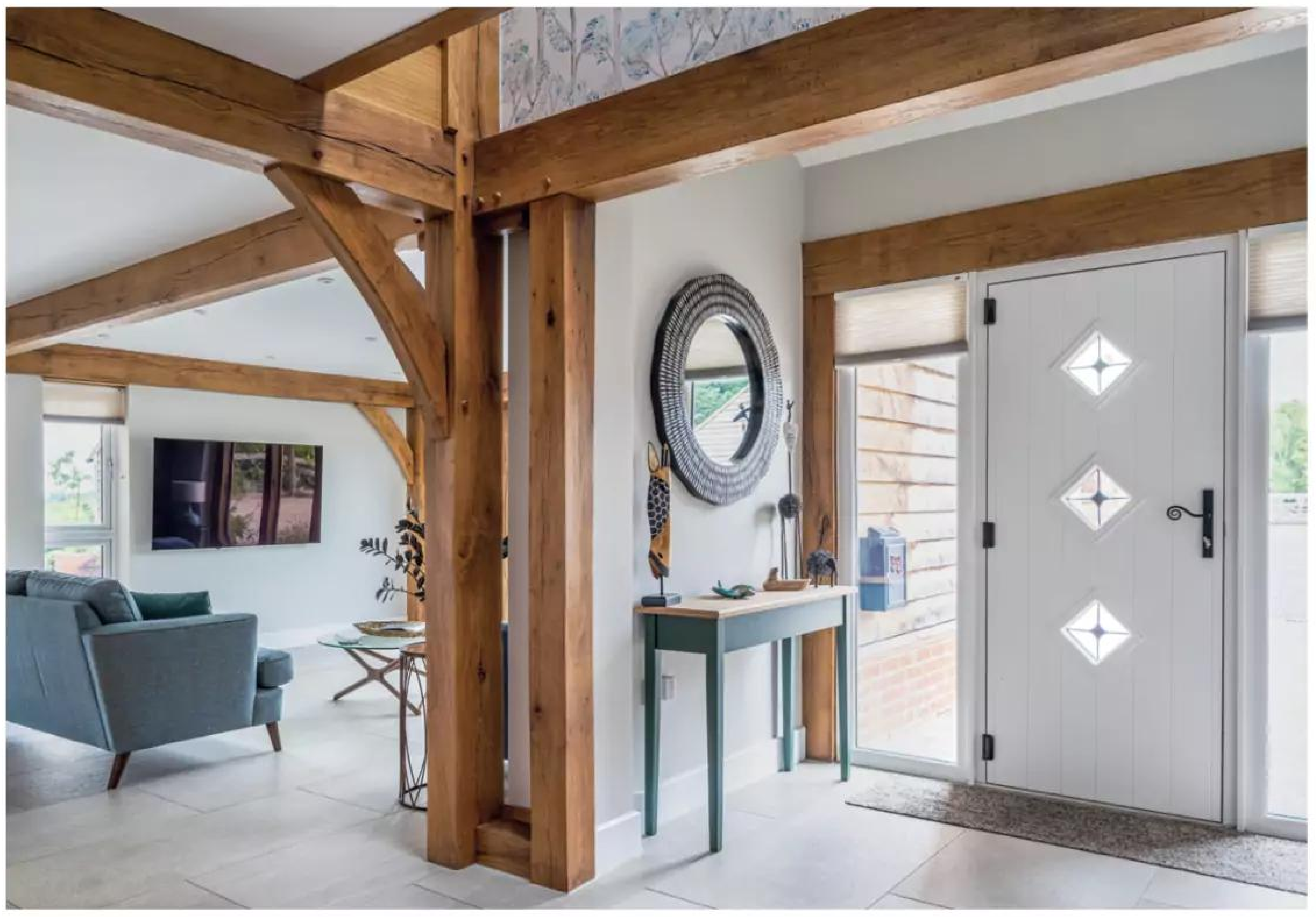
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED February 2020

BUILDING WORK TOOK 104 weeks

CURRENT VALUE Approx £1.4m

Above: Light grey Italian porcelain tiles and a pale blue nature print wallpaper connect the open-plan spaces throughout downstairs

Below right: Staggered hanging pendants are proportionate to the high ceilings, where the patterned wallpaper draws the eye as you ascend the stairs. The underfloor heating manifold is inside the built-in cupboard with shelves for linen storage



Anthony worked with the Welsh Oak Frame design team on their home and the workshop at the same time. Although he'd never built an oak frame house before, he understood the construction principles, allowing him to see where improvements could be made. "I thought about the furniture layout in every room – like where the bed head would be so a post or window wasn't in the wrong position," he says. "Welsh Oak worked to the millimetre to make sure things looked symmetrical and all the rooms feel like they're in the right place."

The process also helped Anthony and Alison see they could make a feature of an oak frame post in their ensuite bathroom. "We realised

if we moved the room over a bit we could have the bath on one side of the post and the rest of the fittings on the other," Anthony explains. "Welsh Oak were quite willing to make the tweaks, ensuring the window was still central and the wall panels lined up. Once the oak frame design was agreed, there was no changing it."

Getting it built

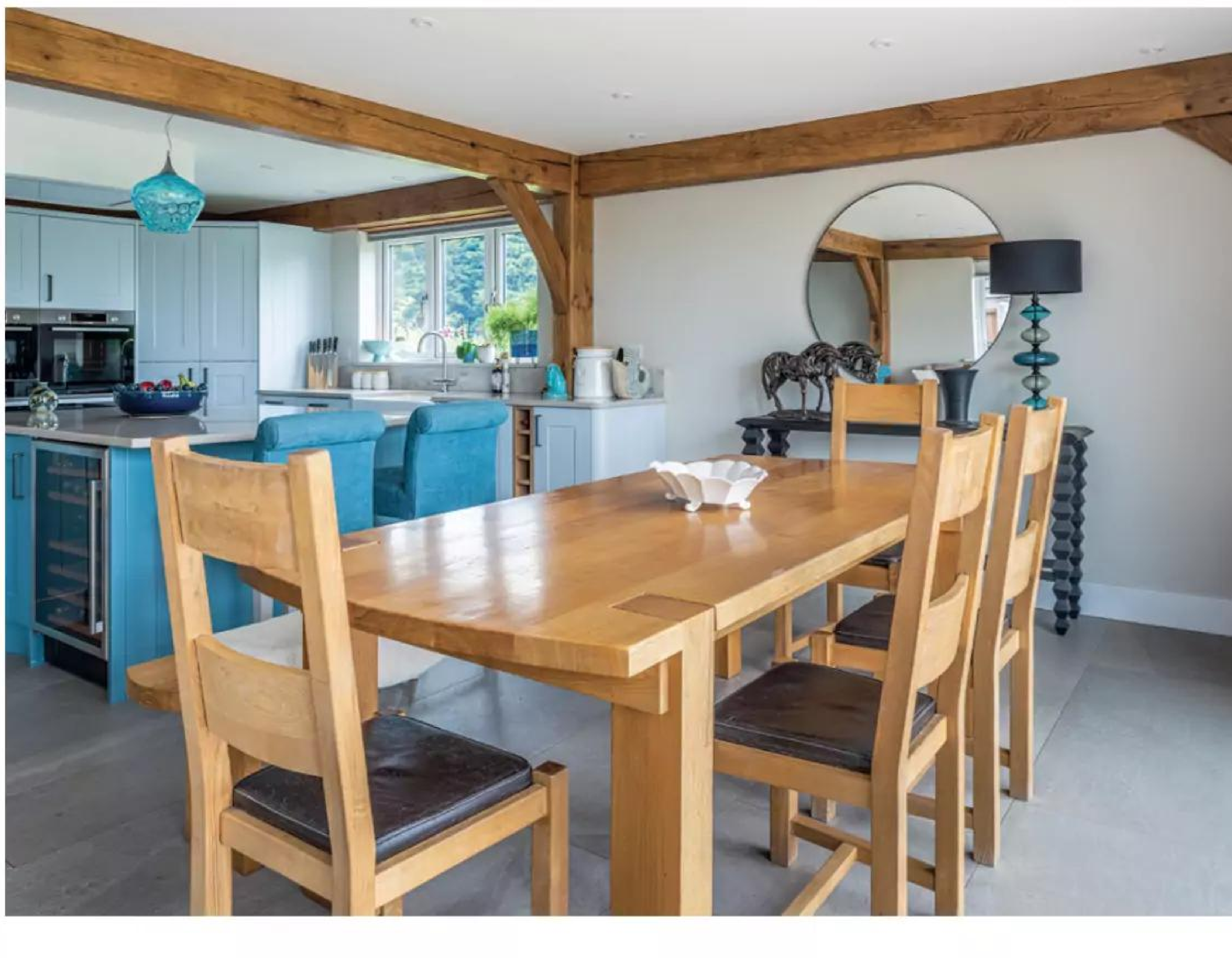
Anthony's company, Goodey Construction, were well underway with the farmyard development when they began the groundworks for the couple's house in early 2020. Welsh Oak Frame's team were already on site erecting the frame for the workshop and, in March, they moved onto the couple's home – but disaster struck. "The oak framers weren't far from finishing when the news broke that the country was going into lockdown," says Anthony. "The place they were staying at told them they had to leave, so they quickly returned to Wales. It meant we could do no more work on the new house until they returned."

Fortunately, the frame was structurally sound with the walls up but no exterior panels, and while the first floor was in, the roof wasn't finished. Anthony and the team protected the frame from the elements and put the remaining materials and the tools in storage. Once Anthony knew the rules for working during the pandemic, he managed to keep the rest of the development going. "We were constructing all five houses together and luckily they were at different stages," he says. "I was allowed to split the trades out so they could carry on working. It was quite the balancing act as we needed to sell the properties to pay off our debts and move into the barn."

In September, the oak framers returned and spent a further three weeks finishing the frame. The build team picked up the reins while Anthony struggled to get hold of materials at times due to shortages, resorting to bulk buying and storing everything on site.

The house is wrapped in structural insulated panels (SIPs) and sealed to be airtight, while a mechanical ventilation heat recovery system sends continuous fresh air around the home. "Quite a bit of

Above, right & below: The kitchen-diner benefits from glazing on two sides with views across the equestrian centre. The Shaker-style cupboards are from Wren Kitchens and painted in Marshmallow and China Blue. The Brazilian quartzsite worktop is 30mm thick, from The Only Way Is Granite



WE LEARNED...

ADAPT THE ROOM DESIGNS with your chosen oak frame supplier to include your must-have features and create some wow factor. Welsh Oak Frame were very experienced at developing the final design alongside our preferences.

FULLY DESIGN THE LAYOUT and look of each room before getting started on construction and specifications, as you can't change the oak frame or key features once it's installed.

ENSURE THE FOUNDATIONS are accurately set out so that the frame can be erected swiftly once on site, avoiding costly delays and alterations.

Above: Anthony and Alison were impressed with Welsh Oak Frame's suggestion to make the curved cruck truss a feature in the main bedroom. Full height doors with a Juliet balcony look out across the fields

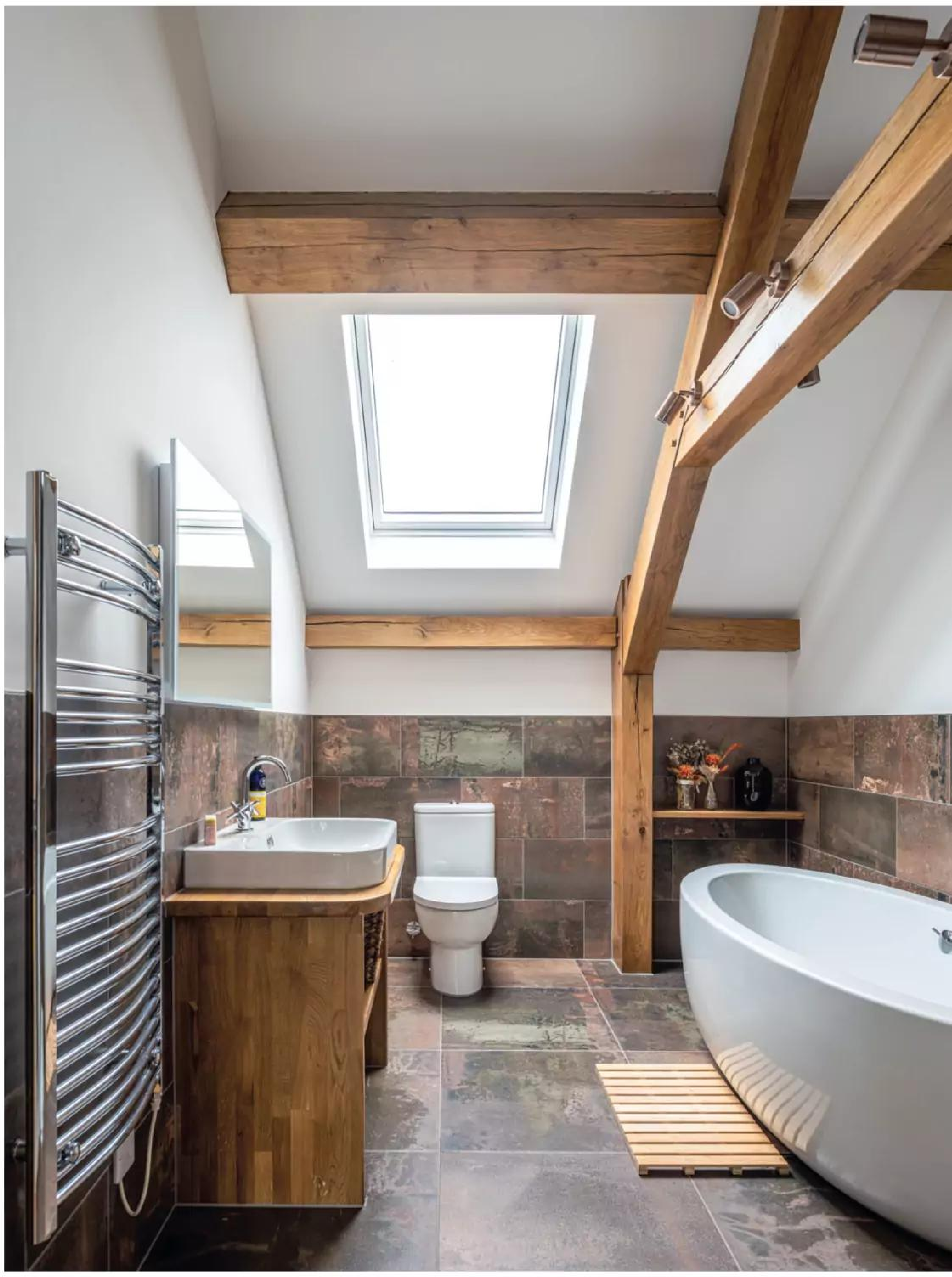
Right: The oak frame is kept minimal, with only key pieces left exposed, complemented by a neutral white decor. The large window is south-facing and the room can get hot in summer so the couple installed a fan

work goes into the construction to hide the utilities in the voids, but you can't see any of this in the finish," says Anthony. "We like that the barns look old but they're fit for modern living and comfortable, thanks to an air source heat pump and underfloor heating."

Externally, the roof is fitted with traditional plain clay roof tiles, sourced from France, and the walls are clad in featheredge oak weatherboarding, to look like a traditional local barn. "I could have used softwood and stained the boards black but we wanted a high level finish with oak inside and out," says Anthony. "We felt all the houses deserved standout features and good quality fittings so we didn't skimp on the kitchens and bathrooms either."

Anthony's sons Kieran, an electrician, and Daniel, a plasterer, both worked on the project with him – the carpenters and plumbers were also father and son teams. When technical queries arose, Anthony spoke to Welsh Oak Frame. "They were very helpful throughout the

Right: The position of the bath was thought about during the oak frame design process, resulting in the room being moved over to make a centrepiece of the frame and create a more symmetrical layout. Anthony's build team made the oak vanity unit while the basin is from Duravit and the bath from Plumbworld



build and frequently sent over details on the best way to go about things. I established a good rapport with the people in the office, which was very valuable" he says. "Even for minor queries, they were happy to give me their time. They were great to work with."

Anthony and Alison moved into their new home in February 2022 and spent the next couple of years doing the landscaping and planting in their garden. They still run the livery yard, but on a much smaller scale, and enjoy living on site close to the horses.

"Our home suits the countryside area beautifully, the enclave of farmhouses look like they've always been here and have created a great landmark," says Anthony. "We love that our brand new home is instantly recognisable as a classic barn. At first glance, some might even think it's been converted rather than built from new. If Alison and I were to undertake another self build project, we'd definitely choose an oak frame, it's a really pleasant structure to live in."

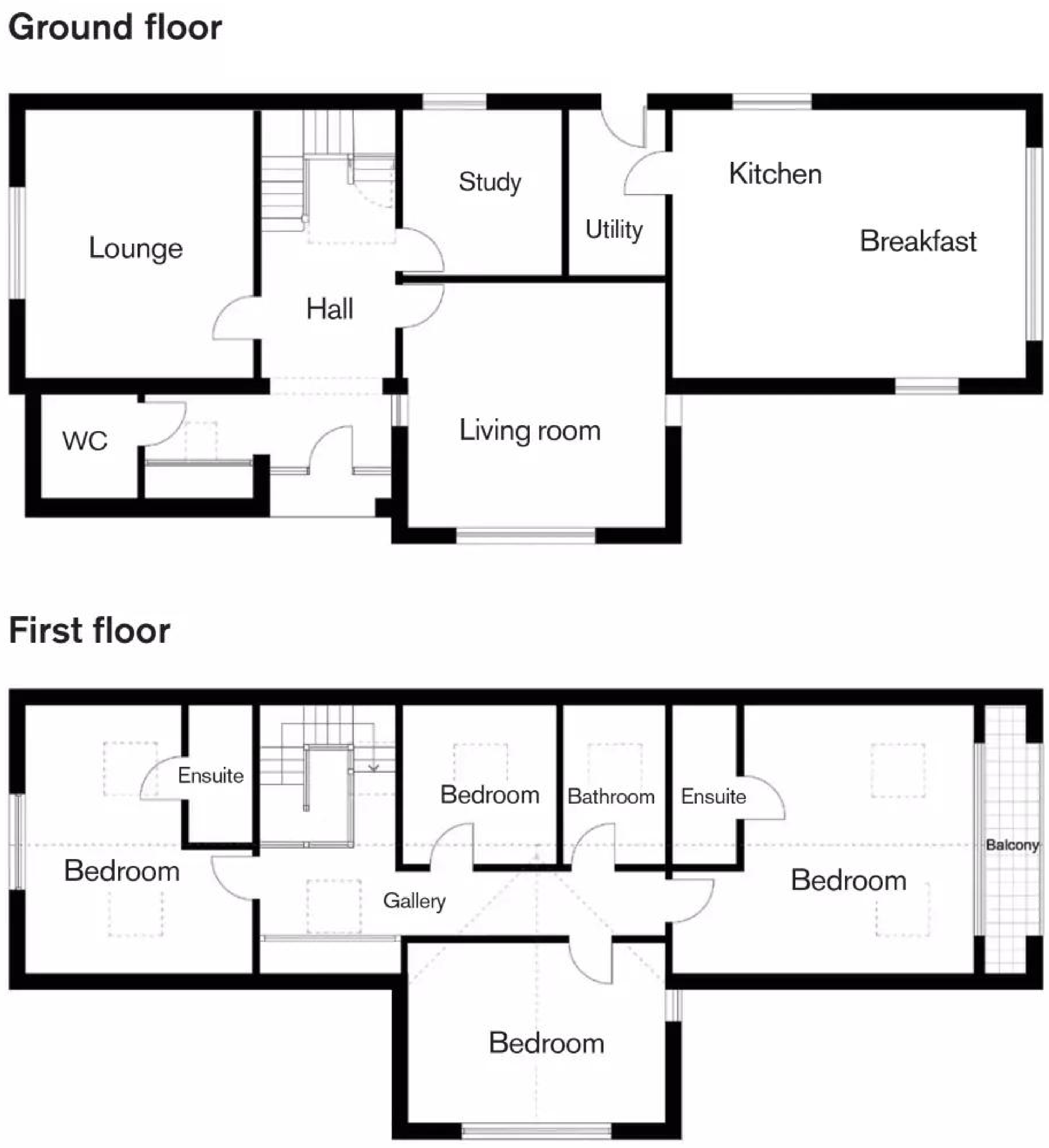
closer look

Working with oak…

Anthony Goodey started his construction company in 1988, but had never built with oak before. Both him and Alison love the finished result and the build process was extremely rewarding. Here, he talks through the process for creating the superstructure: "The oak frame needed time to be manufactured but was quick to go up once it arrived on site," he says. "The oak beams are really solid and weighty compared to softwood. Our home was wrapped in SIPs to make it airtight and all the joints were sealed with foam. The oak was cleaned with oxalic acid and water as soon as the building was watertight. Once dry, it was sealed with Osmo oil, which also protected it while trades were at work. We didn't have to drill into the frame as we ran the services through the open metal web of the floor joists – wastewater pipes first, then ventilation ducts, hot and cold water pipes, and electric cables," says Anthony. "Plasterboard was tucked behind the oak, so when the frame shrank, the boards weren't affected. Downstairs spotlights were carefully planned to avoid services and joists, and we hung lights from the oak ridge beams. 18 months after we moved in, the frame had dried out and shrunk back so we touched up the decoration and re-sealed the shower trays."

Natural warmth

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Substructure	£204	11%	£55,000
Superstructure (incl oak frame)	£602	30%	£162,000
Windows & external doors	£167	9%	£45,000
Carpentry	£56	3%	£15,000
Plumbing, heating & electrics	£279	14%	£75,000
Staircase	£30	2%	£8,000
Tacking, plastering & screeding	£63	3%	£17,000
Kitchen	£167	9%	£45,000
Floor & wall tiling	£45	2%	£12,000
Decorating & carpets	£56	3%	£15,000
External works & roofing	£149	7%	£40,000
Services	£30	2%	£8,000
Professional fees	£93	5%	£25,000
Grand total			**£522,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

BUILDING CONTRACTOR **Goodey Construction** 01245 401411 OAK FRAME **Welsh Oak Frame** 01686 688000 www.welshoakframe.com GROUNDWORKS **Livermore Plant Hire** 07956 417997 ELECTRICIAN **Keiran Goodey** 07875 335938 CARPENTRY **Patrick and David Ryan** 07792 826239 PLUMBING **Mark & Josh Jeffery** 07932 156638 PLASTERER **Daniel Goodey** 07828 834422 MVHR **RegaVent** 01767 600499 www.rega- uk.com/mvhr HEATING **Chelmer Heating Solutions** 01245 471111 www.chelmerheating.co.uk KITCHEN **Wren Kitchens** www.wrenkitchens.com; **The Only Way Is Granite** 01277 800023 www.egkw.co.uk BATHROOM **Duravit** 01908 286680 www.duravit.co.uk; **Plumbworld** 01386 800750 www.plumbworld.co.uk

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OLD MEETS NEW

Conservation work to the front of the house included reinstating the original roof tiles and re-pointing of the stonework. The front door was also updated and the single-glazed windows were upgraded to double-glazed units

A sleek, modern extension has transformed **Julia and Rowan Walker's** traditional 19th century cottage in East Lothian

WORDS **CAROLINE EDNIE** PHOTOS **FREDRIK FRENDIN**

Edinburgh-based couple Rowan and Julia Walker used to enjoy weekends away from the city, walking their dogs along the beaches of East Lothian. Each time the Walkers travelled to their favourite getaway spot, they'd drive past a row of traditional old pantiled, sandstone workers' cottages in a neighbouring village. In 2017, they saw that one of the properties was up for sale, sparking their excitement at the prospect of owning a charming period property. It was the perfect chance to create the idyllic rural lifestyle they had long dreamed of.

For the first few years, Rowan and Julia found that the two-bedroom cottage provided an ideal base for a quieter way of life, especially compared to their previous city-centre flat. Plus, it was still within travelling distance of their jobs in Edinburgh. However, when their first child arrived, the house started to feel too small. "So, we had to decide – do we move out and try to get something bigger? Or do we extend and get an extra five to 10 years out of the house?" says Julia. "We decided this was where we were happy in the short to medium term, as the location is ideal, with plenty of nearby amenities, including schools."

At this stage the couple approached Tom Armistead of Edinburgh-based Somner Macdonald Architects. Rowan and

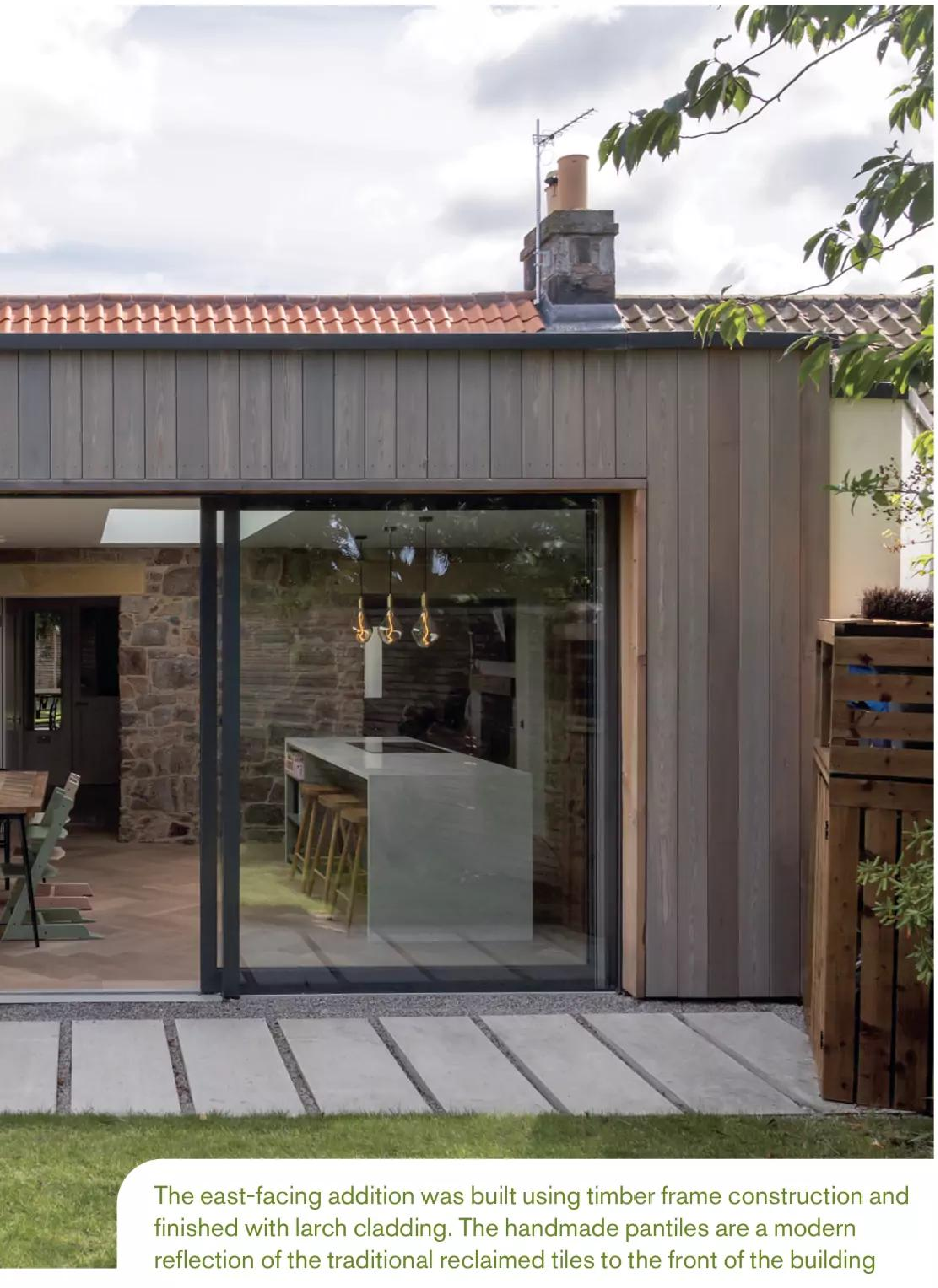
his parents had a long association with the practice, who had previously renovated several of their properties in Edinburgh. "They were an obvious choice for us and we knew exactly what we would be getting from them," says Julia.

Crafting the design

The main goal in the couple's brief was to create more space. "It's a small cottage and the others in the row had extensions," says Julia. "We had a tiny kitchen, so we wanted to create a bigger zone with a dining area where we could spend time together as a family." Also on the couple's wish list was a second bathroom. "Those were our real must-haves and we told Tom to see what he could do."

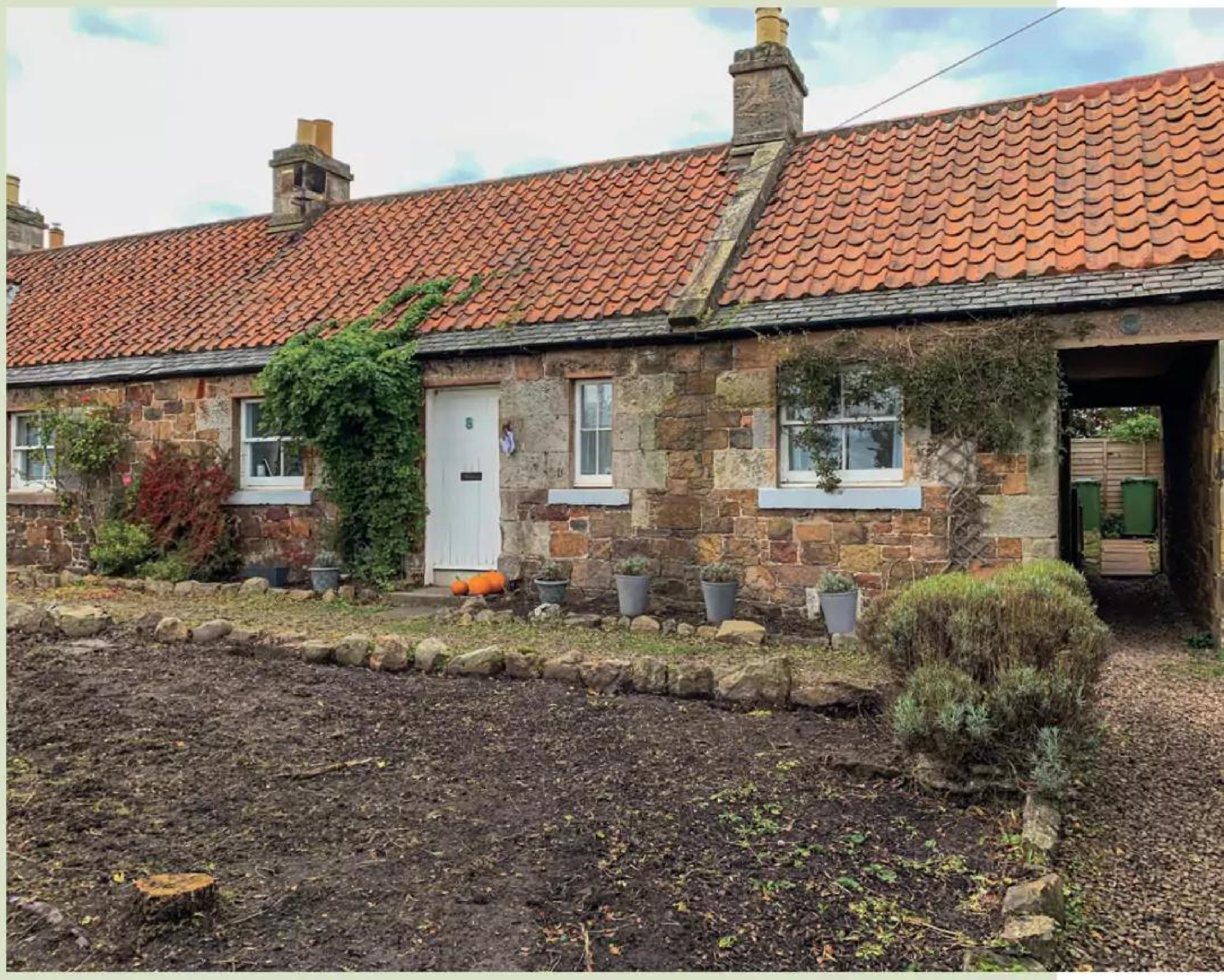
The footprint of the existing c-listed cottage was around 55m². There was a kitchen offshoot at the back, which was a later-built extension, a middle hallway, bathroom to the rear and a living room on one side with two bedrooms on the other. "We presented different options for the scheme," says Tom Armistead. "This included a larger extension with a spacious master bedroom and courtyard, but that was a no-go with the planners."

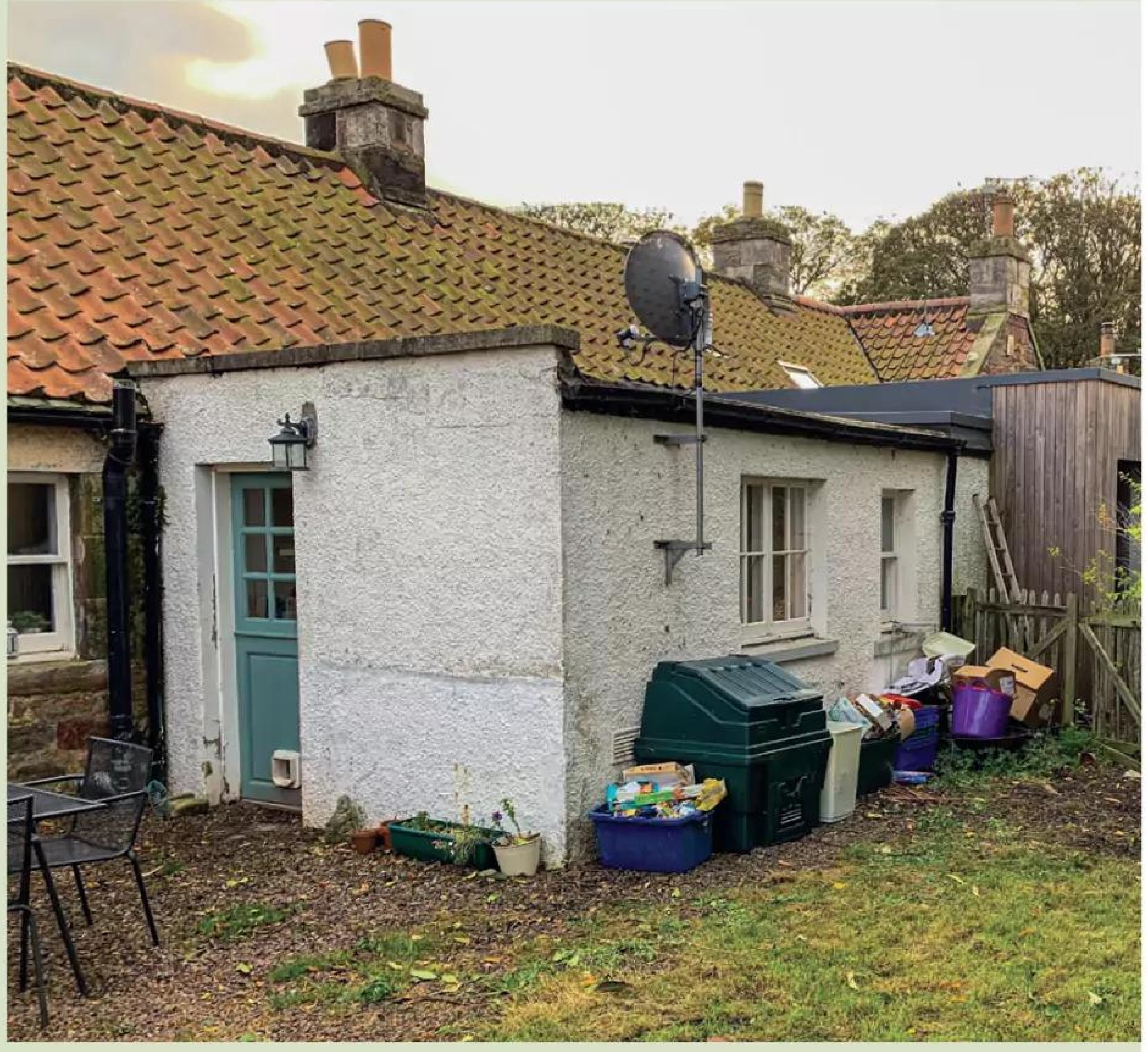
However, the fact that the neighbours already had extensions set a precedent for development. Somner Macdonald's final design would increase the floor area of Rowan and Julia's house to around 90m². The considerable rear addition would run along the back of the building, almost doubling the property's footprint. The idea was for it to be partly timber-clad and partly rendered. "We wanted the timber to age and weather naturally, like the cottage itself has," says Tom. "We didn't want it to look pristine – we were keen for it to have it's own character."



The east-facing addition was built using timber frame construction and finished with larch cladding. The handmade pantiles are a modern reflection of the traditional reclaimed tiles to the front of the building

BEFORE THE RENOVATION





Packed with heritage charm and plenty of character, the original cottage was in need of some modern upgrades to make it suitable for busy family life. To achieve a comfortable and functional home, the awkward addition to the rear, and the inefficient glazing, were sensitively replaced during the renovation and extension project. This transformed the look and feel of the main structure while maintaining that classic, rural feel

FACT FILE

NAMES Rowan & Julia Walker

OCCUPATIONS Cafe owners

LOCATION East Lothian

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation & extension

STYLE Contemporary addition to 19th century cottage

PROJECT ROUTE Architect designed, hired contractor for construction & project management

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame

PROPERTY COST £240,000

BOUGHT 2017

HOUSE SIZE 85m²

PLOT SIZE 400m²

PROJECT COST £252,500

PROJECT COST PER M² £2,971

TOTAL COST £490,000

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED October 2020

BUILDING WORK TOOK 54 weeks

MOVED IN October 2021

Above & right: The floors have been finished with Russwood's Grand Parquet in natural white. Uplighters are set into the surfaces to illuminate the walls in the evening

Right: Discreet pocket doors were chosen to save every inch of precious space in the compact floorplan

before the project. The new addition also accommodates a larger master bedroom, while the second bedroom is in the original house.

Project progress

Julia and Rowan moved out during the year-long construction phase, which took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. "We decanted to my in-laws' house close by. They were living in Asia and had purchased the property to move into, but got locked down in Hong Kong," says Julia. Having an empty home nearby worked well for the Walkers, who stayed in their relatives' house for about nine months.

The couple hired building firm Dovetail Contracts (who are no longer in business) to take care of construction and project management. As part of the initial works, the cottage was stripped back to its shell. The original rear wall was retained to act as a boundary between the old and new parts of the house. "It's really a building of two halves – the traditional rubble-built stone cottage, and the modern timber frame extension at the back," says Tom. All of the floors were dug up so insulation could be installed, before underfloor heating was laid on top. Dovetail Contracts were also in charge of building the internal joinery and the kitchen. The extension features energy-efficient triple-glazing to help prevent heat from leaking out of the house, as well as rooflights, which have been transformative in channeling light into the new space and through to the back of the building. "It still looks like a charming traditional cottage, but the thermal performance is more like what you'd expect from a modern building," says Tom.

The planners were on-side with this strategy, as they were most concerned with the appearance of the front of the property. "Everything we did at the facade was about enhancing the existing character of the building, such as fixing downpipes and putting in new double-glazed windows, which perform well but matched the existing character of this and the neighbouring properties." The roofing was replaced with existing reclaimed pantiles and the masonry was repointed. "There was a lot of vegetation and trapped moisture damaging the stonework at the front. It was about conservation to the street-facing side of the house."

Inside, the family wanted a new open-plan kitchen and dining area and two bedrooms. "This type of layout is pretty ubiquitous in most projects now," says Tom. The living room in the existing cottage was retained, maintaining its original character via details such as the fireplace and stonework. Double pocket doors allow the space to be closed off from the rest of the house when needed.

"In the extension, sliding doors open from the new kitchen-diner into the northwest facing garden at the back," says Tom. This creates a connection to the outside that the house was missing

Reflecting on how it felt to live in the cottage prior to the build, Julia agrees that the internal comfort level is now much better than it used to be. "It was a very draughty house before, to the point that you could feel the wind on a gusty day," says Julia. "We had single glazing before, so it's made a big difference replacing the original units with double-glazed alternatives to the front of the house, and triple to the back. It feels very cosy."

When the Walkers eventually moved back into the cottage, they did so as a family of four, as Julia gave birth to the couple's son while work was going on. Though the house is still modest, Julia believes it is perfectly formed. "Space-wise, it's perfect for now," she says. "We have a girl and a boy, so they're not going to share a bedroom forever – which means we have a time limit on the house. But we knew that was going to be the case, and we love it for now."

Favourite features

The family adore the new, open-plan living space that flows through the extension. "The way the kitchen-diner links to the living room is

WE LEARNED...

POCKET DOORS ARE A GOOD USE OF SPACE. We have them in one bathroom, our bedroom, plus the living room to kitchen, and it's worked out great. The house feels open-plan, but we can close areas off when we need that added flexibility in the plan.

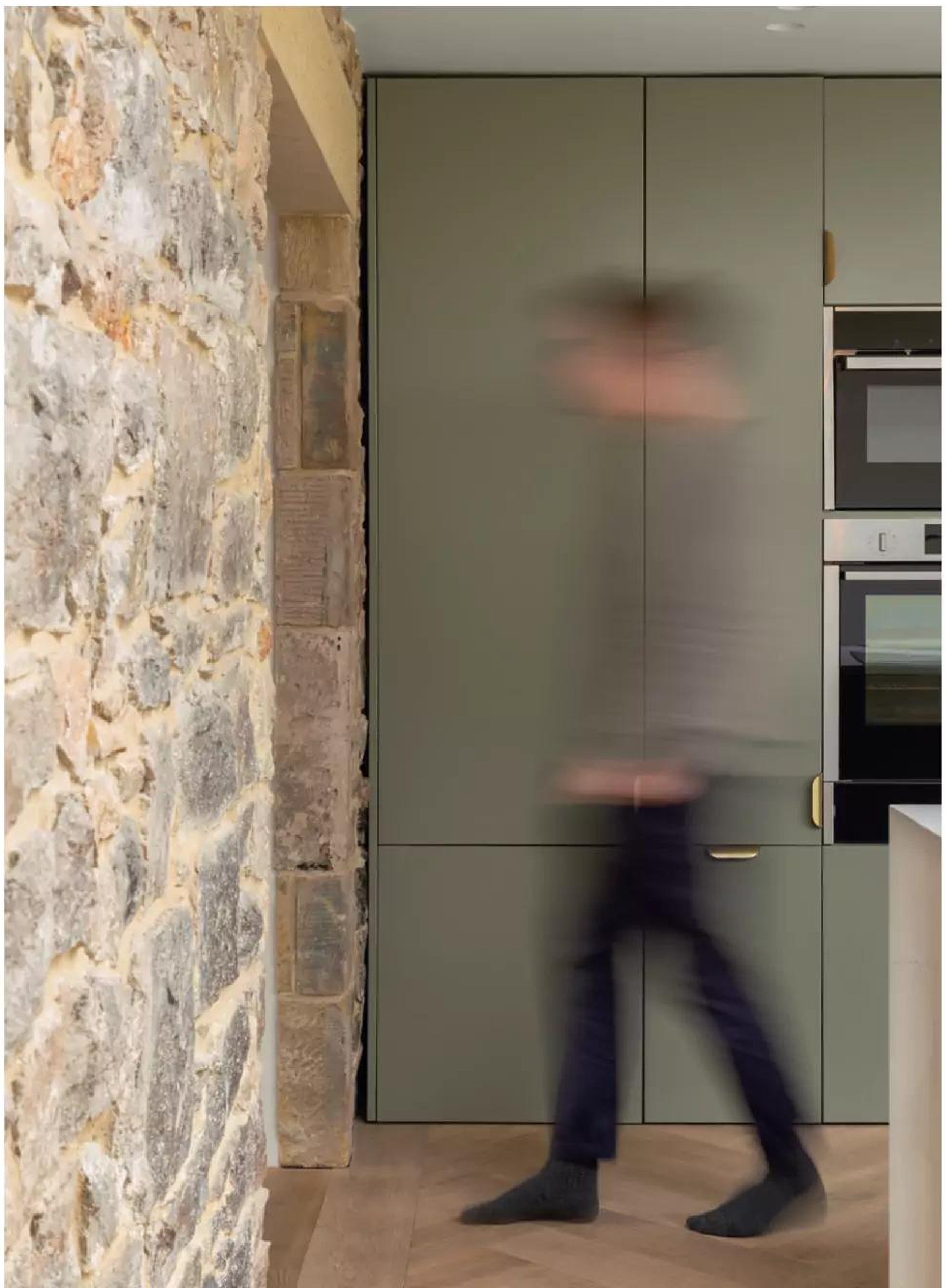
PLAN ROOM SIZES CAREFULLY. Reflecting on the build, the only thing I'd change is how big our bedroom is. The kitchen-diner is so generously proportioned, if we'd have lost a foot of that space and added it to the master instead, it would have made a big difference. Rowan is very tall and so we need a king-size bed – which means there's not a lot of spare floor area. It's perfectly practical and has plenty of storage, but a bit more room would have been beneficial.

THE OPEN-PLAN LAYOUT works so well for our young family. We can be in the kitchen cooking lunch or dinner and still be able to watch the kids at the same time. Everything functions as we want it to because we got to tailor each feature to our lifestyle.

Left: The sun-soaked kitchen features the largest rooflight the architects could fit into the space. It maximises the amount natural south-west light that can be harnessed throughout the day

Right: In the extension, the oak flooring is laid in a herringbone pattern, whereas in the main house vertical planks were selected to echo the property's original flooring. An electric flow boiler powers the underfloor heating setup

Below right: The kitchen cabinets, made by the main contractor, are finished in Farrow & Ball's Treron shade of dark green to echo the colours of the garden and add a splash of colour to the otherwise neutral interior scheme



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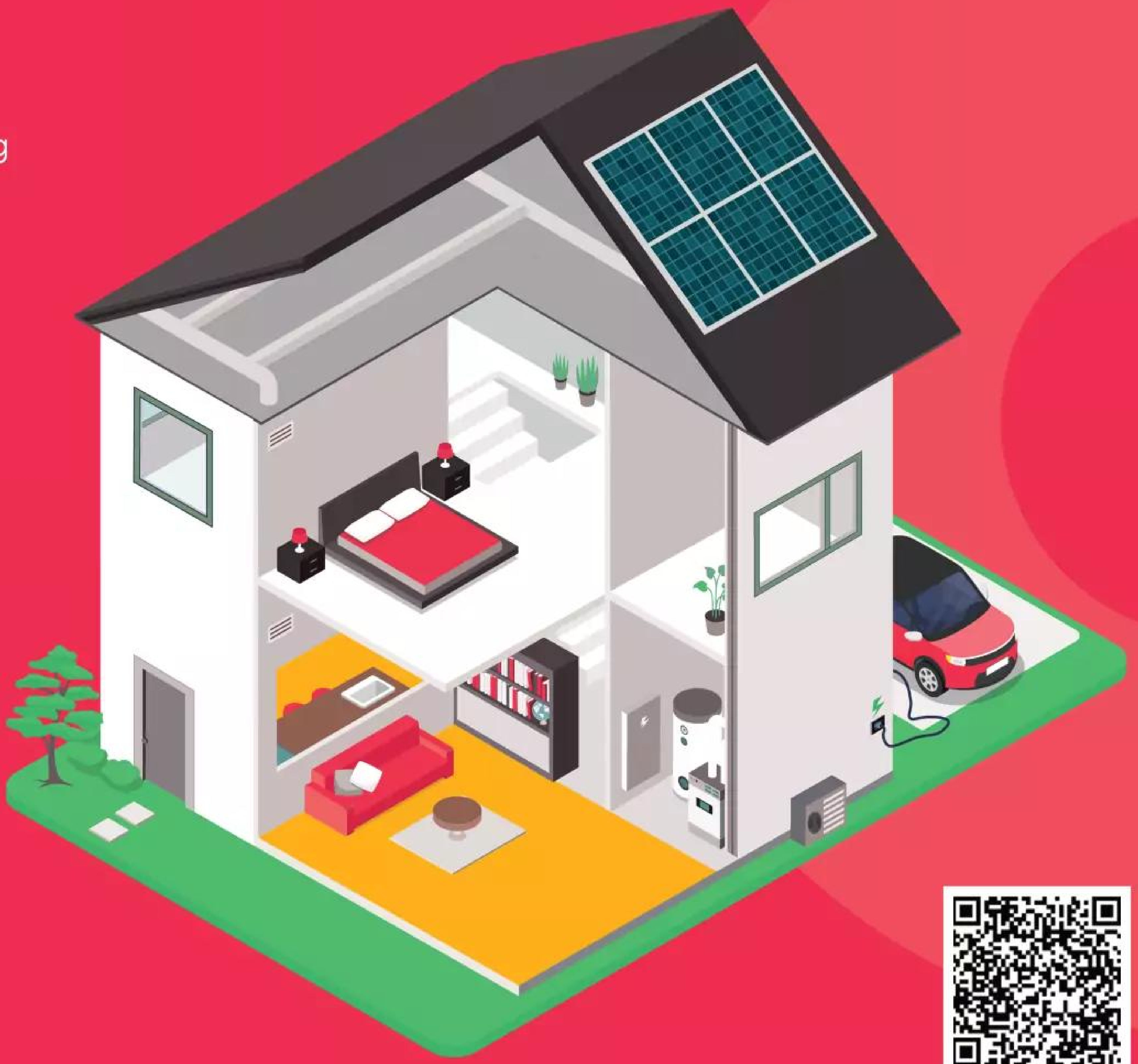

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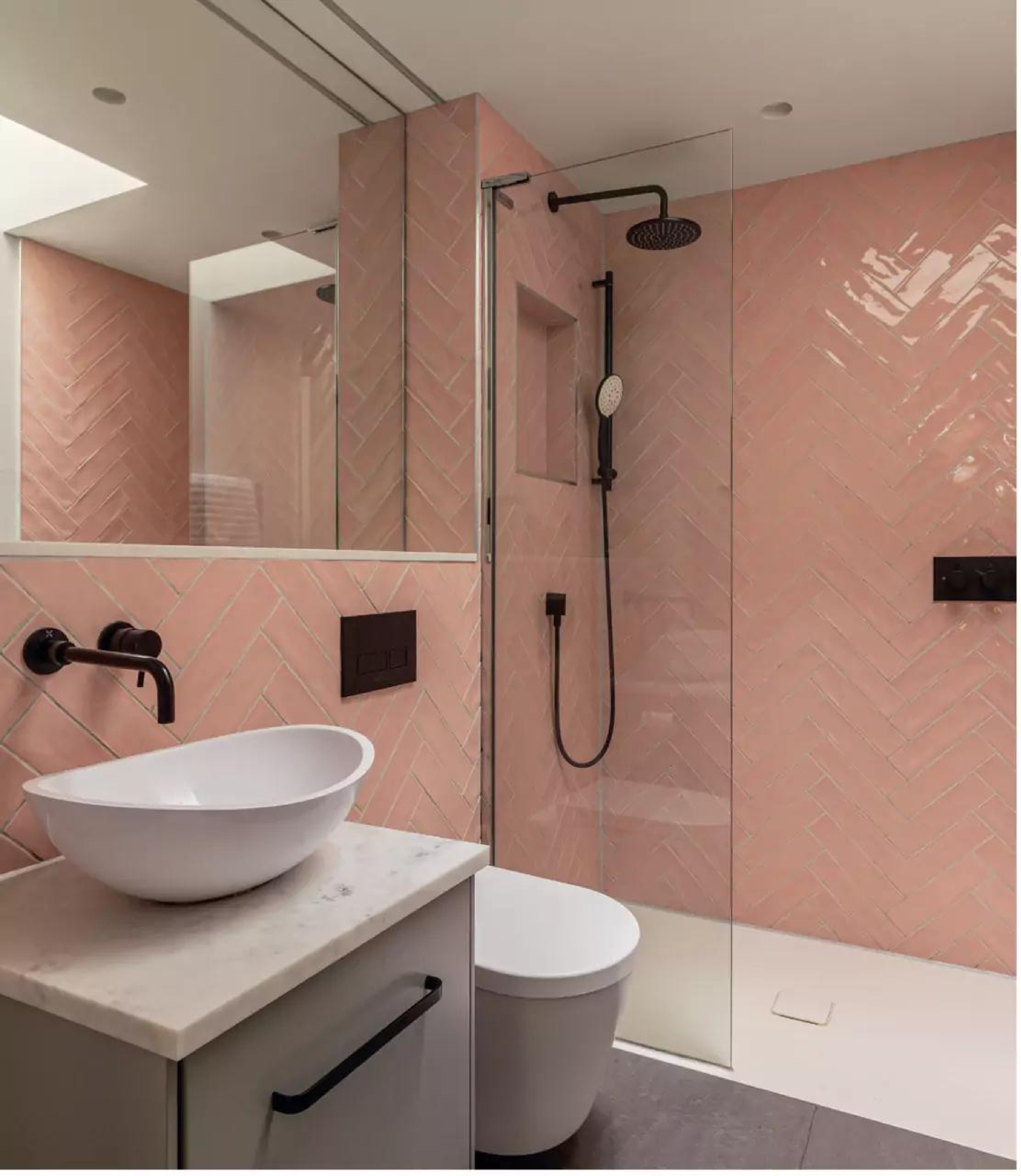
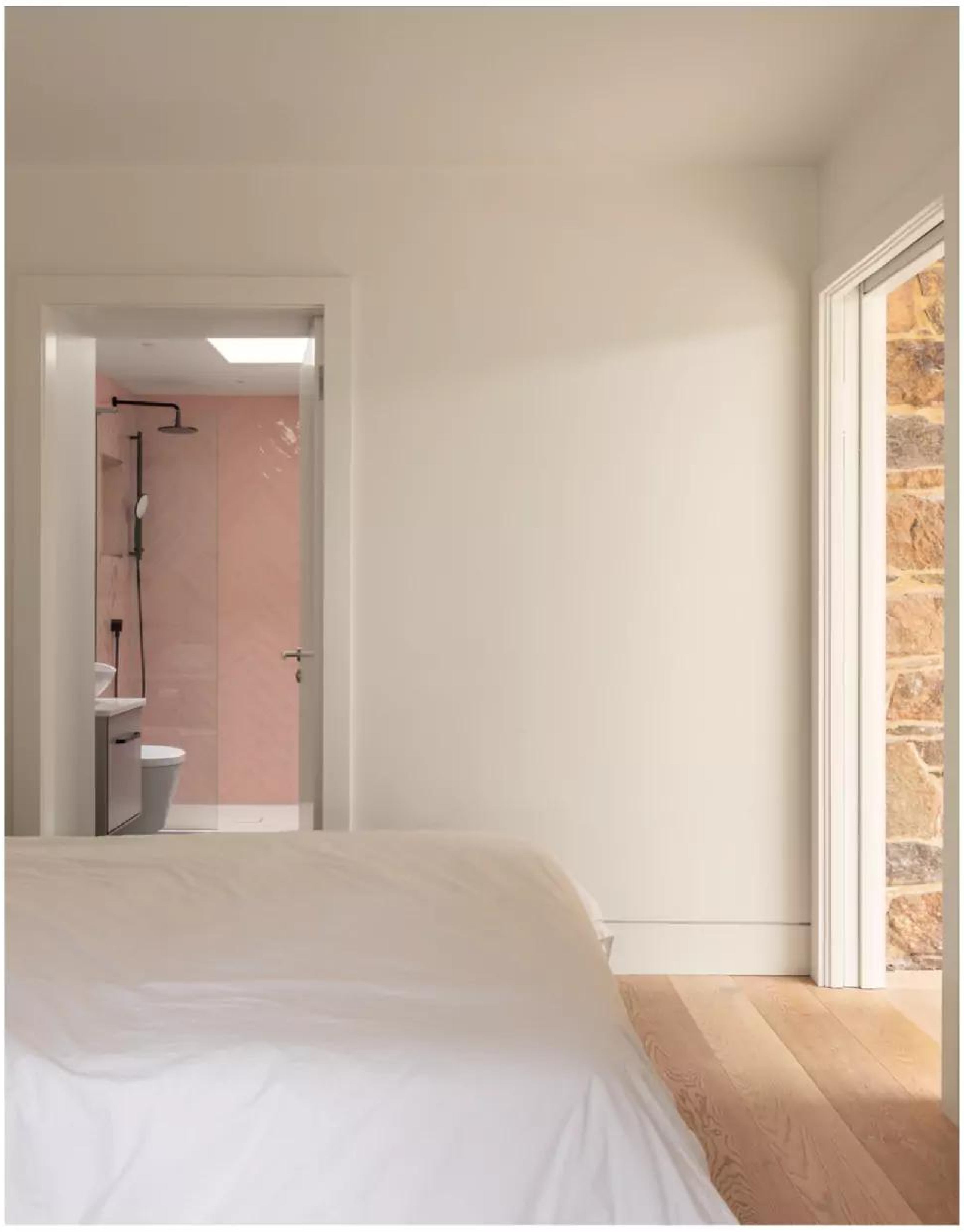




Above left: The pink bathroom was Julia's idea, as she was keen to introduce a fun element to the decor. A mainly neutral palette has been used throughout the rest of the house

Left & above: The master bedroom sits in the extension behind a discreet pocket door

lovely," says Julia, who likes the fact that there's also plenty of room to entertain when extended family and friends come to visit.

For Julia and Rowan, the internal stone walls are one of the design highlights, as they add so much character to the spaces. "The old 1970s extension went across a third of the house at the back wall, and we weren't sure if the original stone would still be intact when we removed the outdated addition," says Julia. "We had no way to tell what condition it would be in, or if we'd have to do repairs, so it was a case of waiting to see what happened once the works began."

The couple took design inspiration from the stone walls of a holiday cottage they'd visited previously in North Berwick. "They had lights in the floor that illuminated the stone walls. We thought it looked great in the early evening when we were staying over winter – it was beautiful," says Julia, who knew she wanted to recreate this effect if the original walls of the cottage were salvageable. "Turning the stone into a feature increased costs, as it required a bit of work to repoint and add the new sandstone lintels, but it was worth it. We have the floor lights as well, for full effect, and the wall looks stunning at night."

Architect Tom Armistead is also thrilled with the result of the scheme. "Workers' cottages are common in the East Lothian area, but there's been a lot of bad examples of how they've been changed over time to meet modern living standards," he says. "What I like about this project is that from the front, where we focused on conservation, you wouldn't know the property had been altered at all." In Tom's view, the cottage's interior functions as a contemporary counterpoint to the traditional elements of the exterior. "Everything works in harmony to create a beautiful and practical family home," he says. "It's a good example of a modest intervention in a historic cottage, which has transformed the space completely."

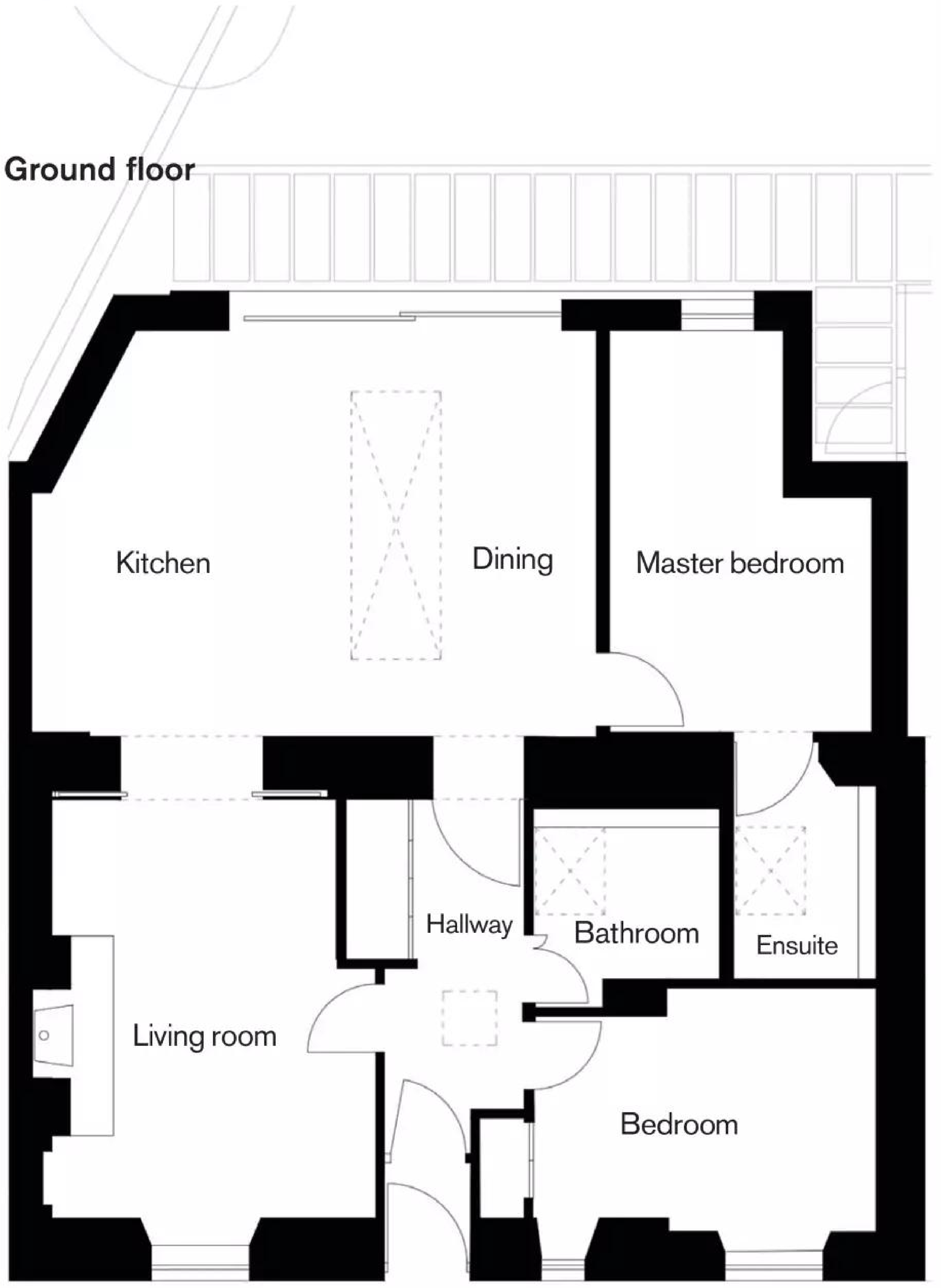
closer look

Maintaining character...

One of the biggest challenges for the project was conserving the street-facing roof at the front of the c-listed cottage. "Re-laying the roof tiles at the front of the house was difficult," says architect Tom Armistead. When all the units were taken down, there weren't enough left to re-cover the front and back of the property's roof. As it was important to maintain the appearance of the front of the house, the original pantiles were used on this side. "However, there was a real disparity between the tiles – it was a hotch potch because many of the handmade units had been manufactured differently." As many of the units were imperfect, getting them to match up turned out to be a laborious process. At the back of the house, handmade pantiles were used, which helped to simplify the process. "This was much easier, but the front with the reclaimed tiles was one of the trickier elements to get right and caused some delays," says Tom.

Traditional feel

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£235	8%	£20,000
Foundations	£235	8%	£20,000
External walls & windows	£494	17%	£42,000
Roof structure & covering	£235	8%	£20,000
Internal walls	£135	5%	£11,500
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£259	9%	£22,000
Joinery & fittings	£724	24%	£61,500
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£341	11%	£29,000
Electrics	£189	6%	£16,000
Decorating	£94	3%	£8,000
External works	£30	1%	£2,500
Grand total			**£252,500**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Somner Macdonald Architects** 0131 558 7575 www.somnermacdonald.co.uk LARCH CLADDING & OAK FLOORING **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk MODERN HANDMADE PANTILES **William Blyth** 01652 632175 www.williamblyth.co.uk SINGLE PLY MEMBRANE ROOF **Alwitra** 01202 785200 www.alwitra.co.uk SILESTONE WORKTOP **Cosentino** www.cosentino.com PENDANT LIGHTS **Tala** 020 4587 6662 www.tala.co.uk BATHROOM TAPS, VANITY & WORKTOP **Crosswater** www.crosswater.co.uk SHOWER **Matki** 01454 322888 www.matki.co.uk BATHROOM TILES **CTD** 0800 014 2994 www.ctdtiles.co.uk SLIDING DOORS **AGB Imago** www.agb.it

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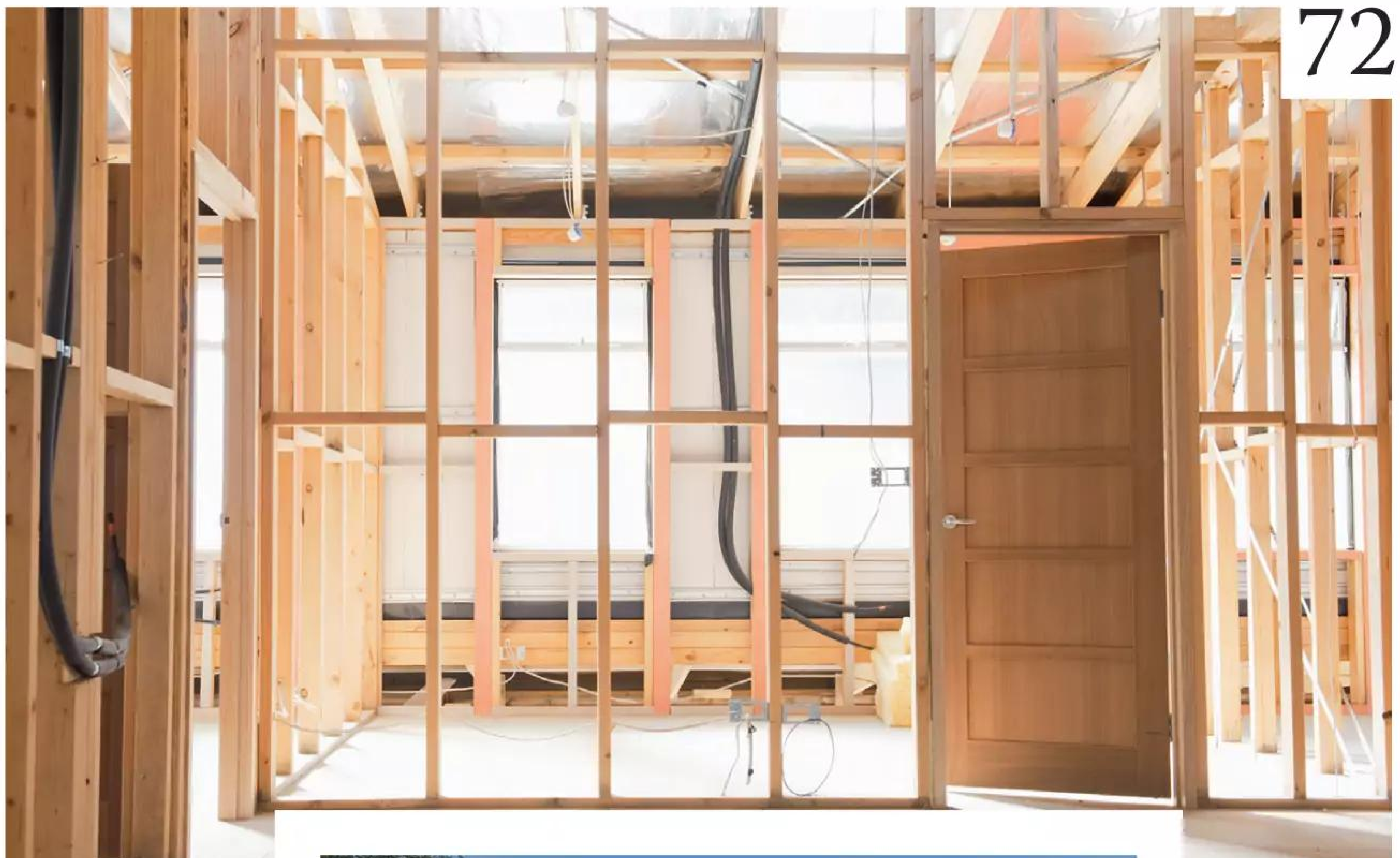
72

64

56

56 **DAYLIGHTING IDEAS**

Erika Chaffey explores a range of design options to help increase natural light levels

61 **VENTILATION & COOLING**

Discover solutions to improve indoor air quality and keep an existing home cooler

64 **BUILDING WITH ICF**

Scarlett Deamer takes an in-depth look at this modern build system to help you decide if it's the right choice for your home

68 **SMART HOMES**

This handy guide explains the best ways to incorporate smart tech into your house design

72 **OPENING UP SPACES**

Renovation expert Kate Sandhu reveals the vital aspects to get right when knocking down internal walls

76 **BASEMENTS IN NEW HOMES**

Digging down could be a great way to maximise your plot. Project management expert Mark Stevenson investigates

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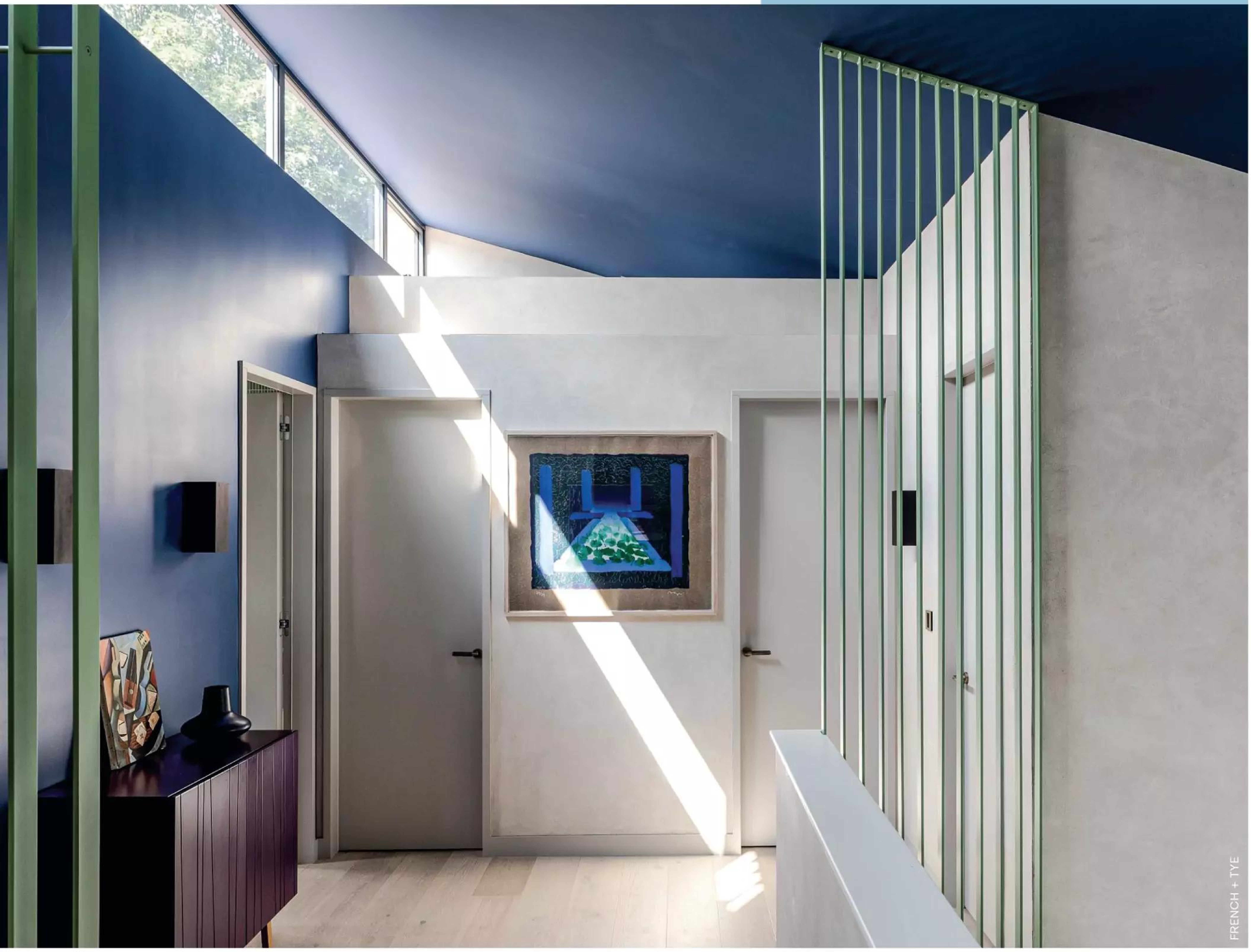
To create bright and inviting living spaces, maximising natural light throughout your home should be a priority on your project checklist. **Erika Chaffey** shares a selection of inspiring design features to consider

DAYLIGHTING IDEAS

Natural light is one of the most valuable design elements in any home, enhancing wellbeing, boosting energy efficiency and increasing the sense of space. Whatever the vision for your ideal self build, extension or renovation project, thoughtful daylighting strategies can transform the look and feel of your home, making each zone feel bright, warm and inviting throughout the day.

Whether you're looking to flood a space with daylight or subtly enhance its brightness, careful planning and shading techniques are key for a successful setup that mitigates excessive heat gains while maximising light flow. Take a look at some popular solutions to help increase access to natural brightness and create a light-filled home that's both functional and beautiful.

In spaces with high ceilings, incorporating glazing at the top level is a clever way to avoid any dark spots and ensure light can reach into each and every corner of your home. Plus, this is ideal for maintaining privacy as direct sightlines are removed from the room. MW Architects designed this double-height landing with a row of slimline clerestory windows, to ensure the zone benefits from plenty of daylight. **(www.mwarchitects.co.uk)**



FRENCH + TYE

A glazed gable makes an eye-catching feature and effectively opens your space up to the outdoors. This stunning oak frame extension to a listed property uses Oakwrights' face glazing system to achieve a wow-factor, gable-end, oak-and-glass structure. The solid roof helps to control solar gains, while the glass walls allow natural light to flood the room and provide access to the surrounding views. **(www.oakwrights.co.uk)**

ROB CRAWSHAW

ANDY STAGG

Full-height glazing can help to both maximise your access to sunlight and create an impressive architectural feature. Incorporated as part of an infill extension to a terraced property by Paul Archer Design, this ultra-slim, large glass pivot door is paired with a rooflight, which extends all the way to the back of the new kitchen-diner. The stunning setup fills the addition, and the main house beyond, with ample daylight. **(www.paularcherdesign.co.uk)**

EXPERT Q&A SPECIFYING YOUR GLAZING

CRAIG LUFF
managing director at ecoHaus Windows & Doors, answers some common questions about designing the ideal glazing setup to help maximise light flow

When should you start planning your glazing design for a self build or extension project?

As early as possible! We've found that when clients involve us from the start, detailing becomes much easier and bespoke solutions remain viable. Your glazing supplier should collaborate with your architect or designer to integrate windows and doors into the drawings, streamlining construction and improving cost efficiency.

Which window and door designs help maximise daylight?

Frame thickness and glass panel size significantly impact light flow. Sliding doors allow excellent access to sunlight, with larger glass panels and minimal framing compared to bifolds. Various window brands, such as Velfac, also provide impressive sightlines with ultra-slim frames, though they may have size limitations. Internorm windows, while not as slim, can be specified in larger dimensions.

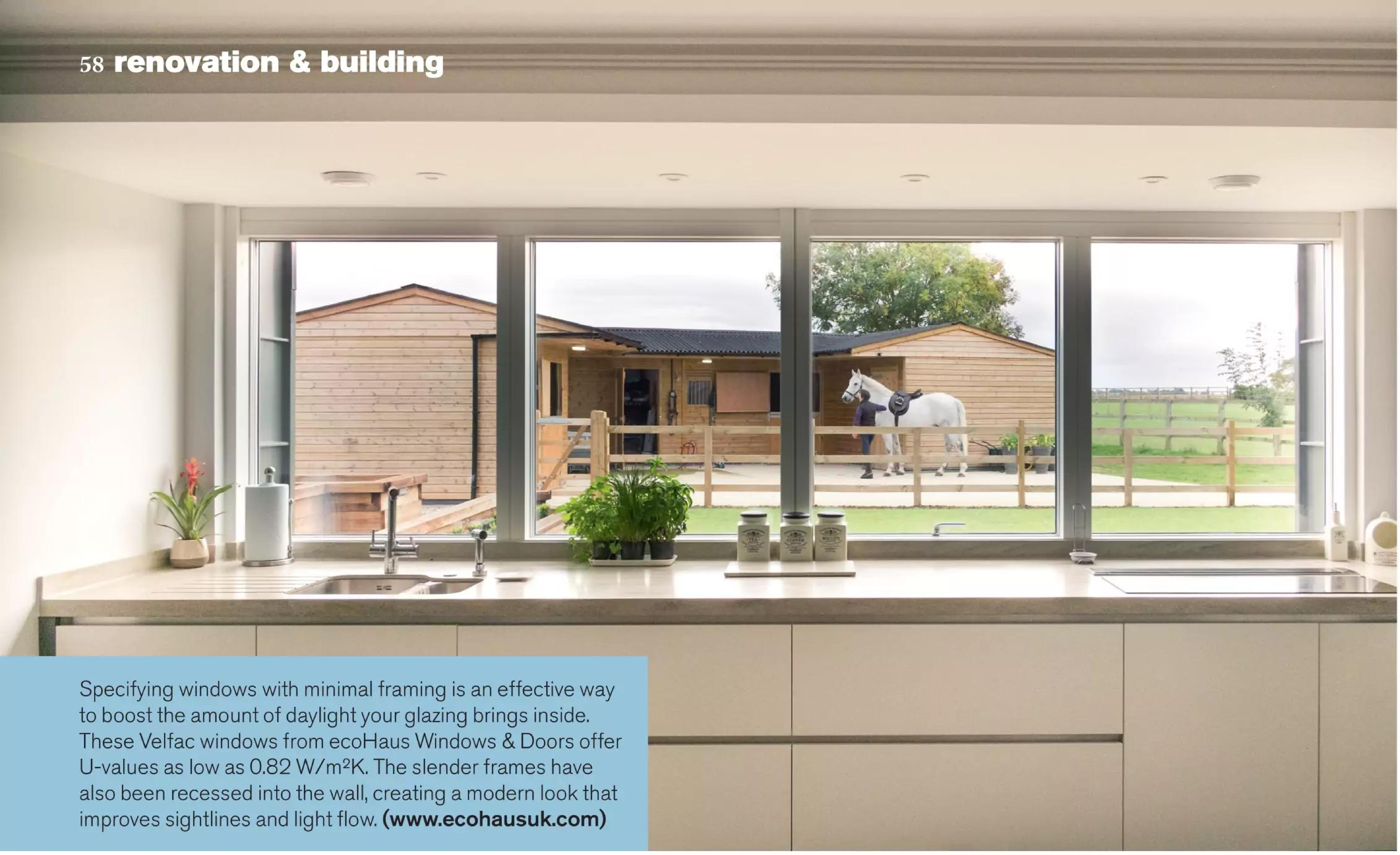
How can you balance privacy with increasing light flow?

This depends on your home's structural design and overall glazing strategy. Consider window placement and where tinted or privacy glass might be beneficial. In some cases, high-quality curtains or blinds that complement your interior design can provide the simplest and most effective solution for maintaining discretion.

What are some solutions to prevent overheating?

Managing heat gain is crucial for any successful project. Look into a range of window styles and glazing options to find the best solution for your project goals. For large glazed areas, solar control glass can reflect heat and reduce absorption, while blinds or fixed external shading solutions can offer additional temperature control.

To create that sought after outdoor-indoor connection and enhance natural light, super-slim glazed bifolds or sliders are ideal for blurring the lines between your garden and interiors. In this project by Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk), Kloeber's UberSlide sliding doors, along with rooflights and double-height glazing, bring an abundance of natural light to the home. **(www.kloeber.co.uk)**



Specifying windows with minimal framing is an effective way to boost the amount of daylight your glazing brings inside. These Velfac windows from ecoHaus Windows & Doors offer U-values as low as 0.82 W/m²K. The slender frames have also been recessed into the wall, creating a modern look that improves sightlines and light flow. **(www.ecohausuk.com)**

Ideally positioned to harness sunshine from above, rooflights and lanterns are a sure-fire way to create a light-filled zone. With edge-to-edge glazing and flush installation on a gently sloping roof, the Neo Rooflight by The Rooflight Co provides a contemporary, frameless look both inside and out, flooding this space below with plenty of daylight. **(www.therooflightco.com)**

For a contemporary touch, a window box can immerse both yourself and your chosen space in daylight. Build It readers Kate and Gary Westlake chose this dramatic up-and-over Oriel picture window to complete the design of their snug room. The floating feature creates the perfect spot to relax and unwind, while soaking up the sunshine.

WILL SCOTT

Incorporating fixed windows into your glazing design can be a great solution for framing views and lighting up a particular room or zone. Complete with internal timber framing to complement this rustic barn conversion project, the alu-clad Clement picture window by Norrsken opens the space up to daylight, while offering a snapshot of the picturesque scene outdoors. **(www.norrsken.co.uk)**

Filling part, or all, of a key wall in your home with glazing is an effective way to increase light flow and create an impressive focal point in your interior scheme. Aluminium-framed curtain walling from IDSystems has been used to make a striking glazed feature on this contemporary conversion of a 300-year-old barn. **(www.idsystems.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW KEY DESIGN CHOICES

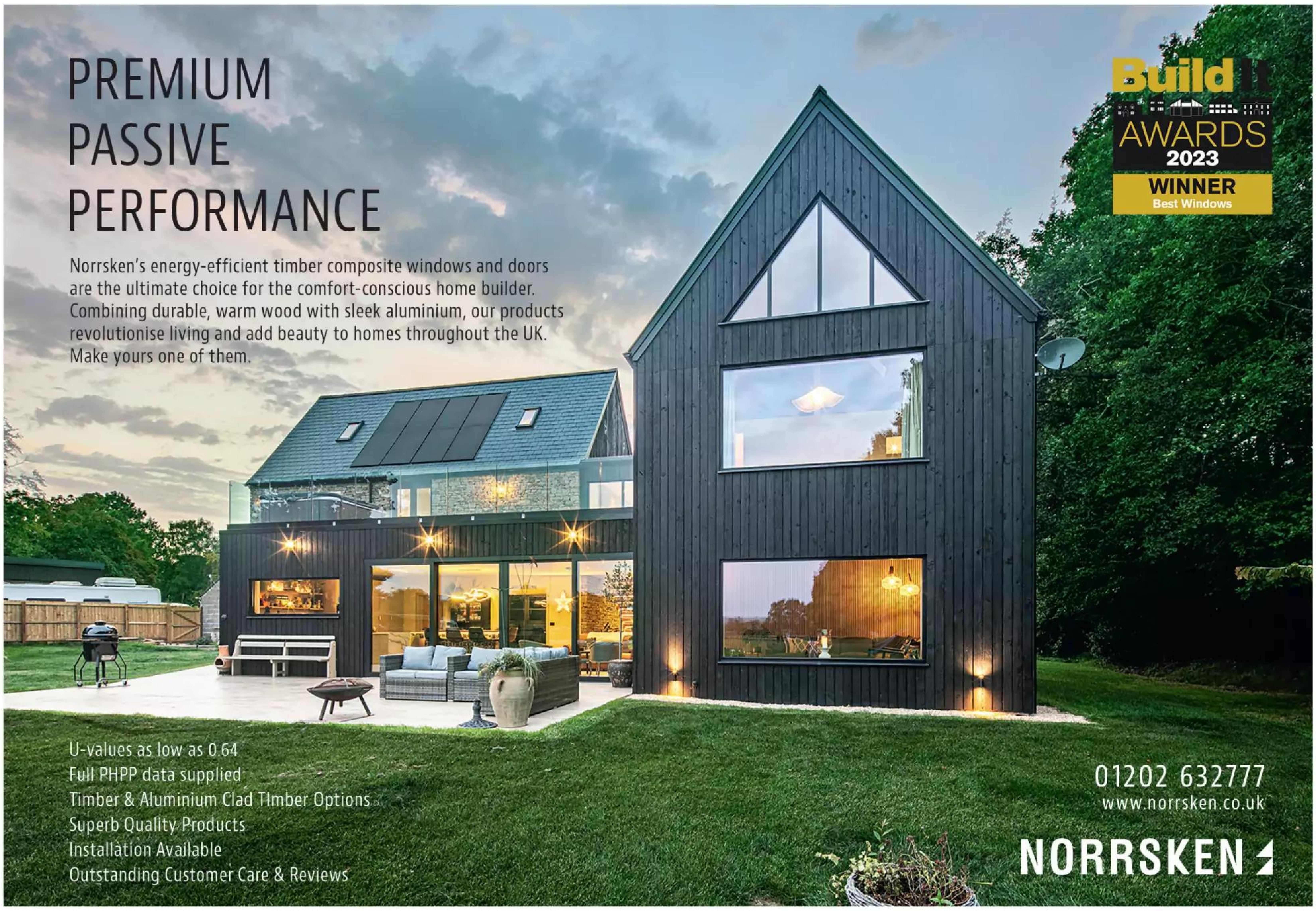
MATTHEW WOOD
director of MW Architects, shares his expertise on how to use these core design elements to maximise natural light flow throughout your home

1 ORIENTATION The positioning of your main structure or extension determines the quality and quantity of light it has access to. South-facing rooms are ideal for living spaces, offering bright, warm light throughout the day. In these areas, consider shading solutions, such as overhangs, to help mitigate overheating and glare. East-facing kitchens and bedrooms benefit from soft morning sun for a great start to the day, while north-facing spaces provide consistent, cooler light that's ideal for restful or functional spaces like bedrooms or studies.

2 LAYOUT Open-plan configurations allow light to travel further through the whole property. Thoughtful landscaping in your outdoor space, including avoiding tall trees or structures that block light, ensures nearby interior zones remain bright and inviting with uninterrupted light flow. Careful consideration of your floorplan and landscape design will help to create a light-filled home with a great connection to its surroundings.

3 GLAZING SIZE & PLACEMENT The overall design of your glazing setup plays a significant role in daylighting. Large south-facing windows bring abundant light but can lead to overheating without suitable shading, for instance. Skylights are particularly effective where vertical glazing isn't possible, allowing sunlight to track across a room and bring the changing colours of light deep into your plan. Clerestory windows and light wells are also excellent for channelling natural brightness into deeper or awkwardly shaped areas, while high-quality doors and windows help balance light flow with energy efficiency.

4 INTERIOR FINISHES Pale-coloured surfaces help amplify natural light, but in south-facing rooms, they can cause excessive glare. By contrast, matte finishes and softer textures can help diffuse light softly. In darker rooms, warm, rich tones, such as reds or yellows, can create a cosy, inviting atmosphere. Reflective materials, such as mirrors or metallic finishes, will further enhance light flow throughout your chosen space.



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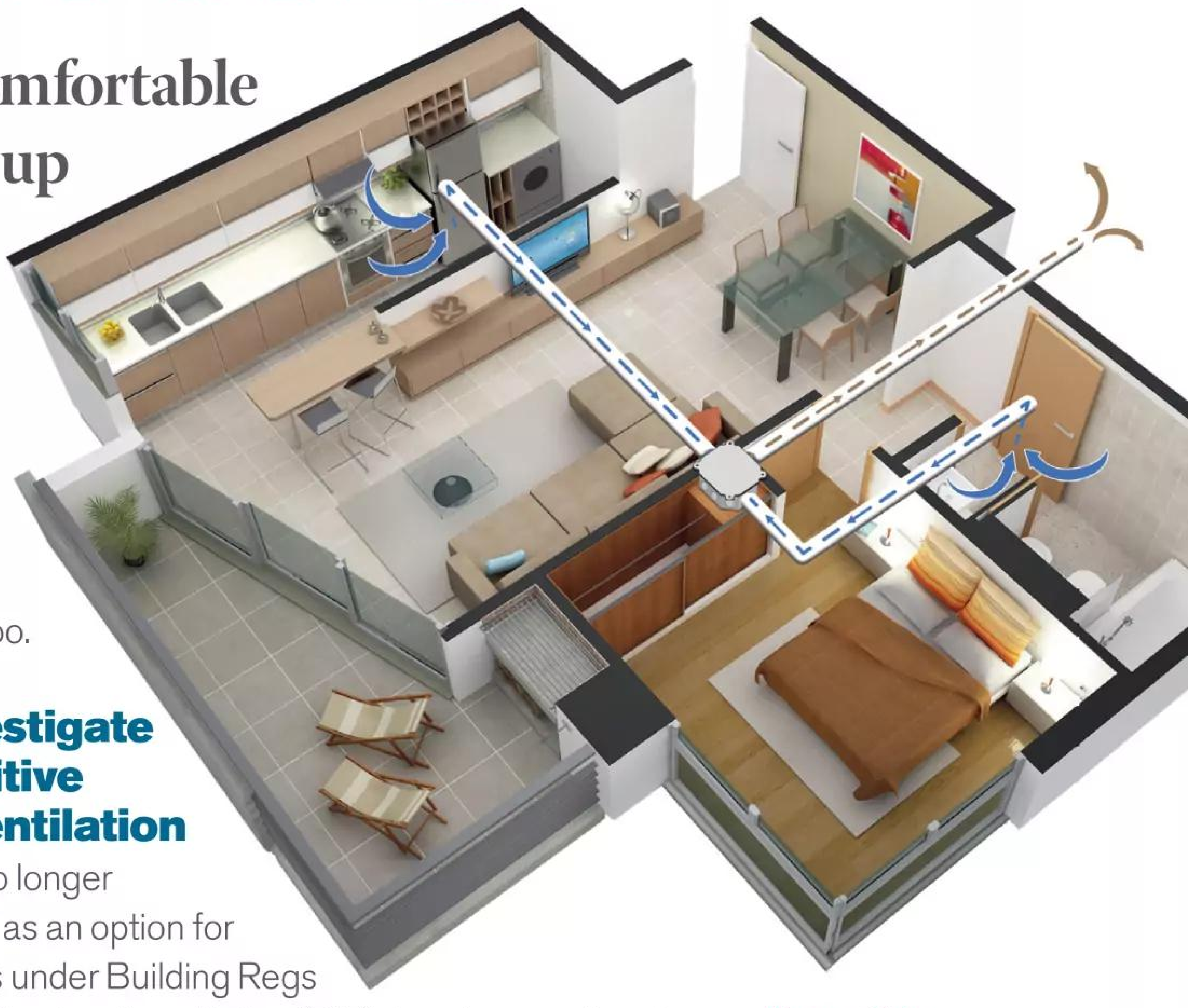
VENTILATION & COOLING FOR EXISTING HOUSES

Keen to boost air quality and maintain a comfortable living environment in your home? We sum up the main ventilation and cooling options



Above: This diagram from Envirovent shows how a centralised mechanical extract ventilation (MEV) system might be installed in a bungalow or apartment. Air is drawn in by the handling unit and expelled outside, with a fresh supply entering the building via background ventilation

The 2022 round of changes to English Building Regulations for ventilation (Part F) and the simultaneous introduction of guidance on overheating (Part O) have shone a light on the need to enable a healthy flow of air and control excessive heat gain in our homes. Good ventilation helps to reduce moisture and condensation issues, support occupant wellbeing and can even provide an element of cooling on hot days. But with average UK temperatures on the rise, do you need to do more to maintain a comfortable and healthy environment in your home? Here's a look at some of the options that could help you do just that.

1 Add background ventilation

Essentially, background vents provide a small opening in the fabric of the building to allow air to pass in and out, thus delivering a fresh supply. The crudest way to do this is to literally bore a hole through the wall, make good and cover it with a grille. It's not pretty and is only suitable for buildings that are already pretty leaky – but if ventilation is all you're looking for, it'll get the job done. Trickle vents (see point 2) are technically a form of background ventilator.

Along with openable windows and doors, background vents can become part of a cross-flow ventilation strategy. This is where pressure differences between one side of the building and the other encourage wind-driven air to flow through the living spaces. The issue with these approaches, of course, is that they rely on uncontrolled natural ventilation. So, useful heat will be lost along with the outgoing stale air – and the cooling effect won't be as pronounced when external temperatures are already high.

2 Fit trickle vents

If you're adding new windows and glazed doors to an existing property, Part F pretty much requires you to use designs that feature trickle vents (unless you're able to retrofit whole-house mechanical ventilation; more on the options for this later). These should be left open and unblocked to promote airflow – yes, even in winter – although humidity-sensing versions are available that automatically adjust the vent accordingly.

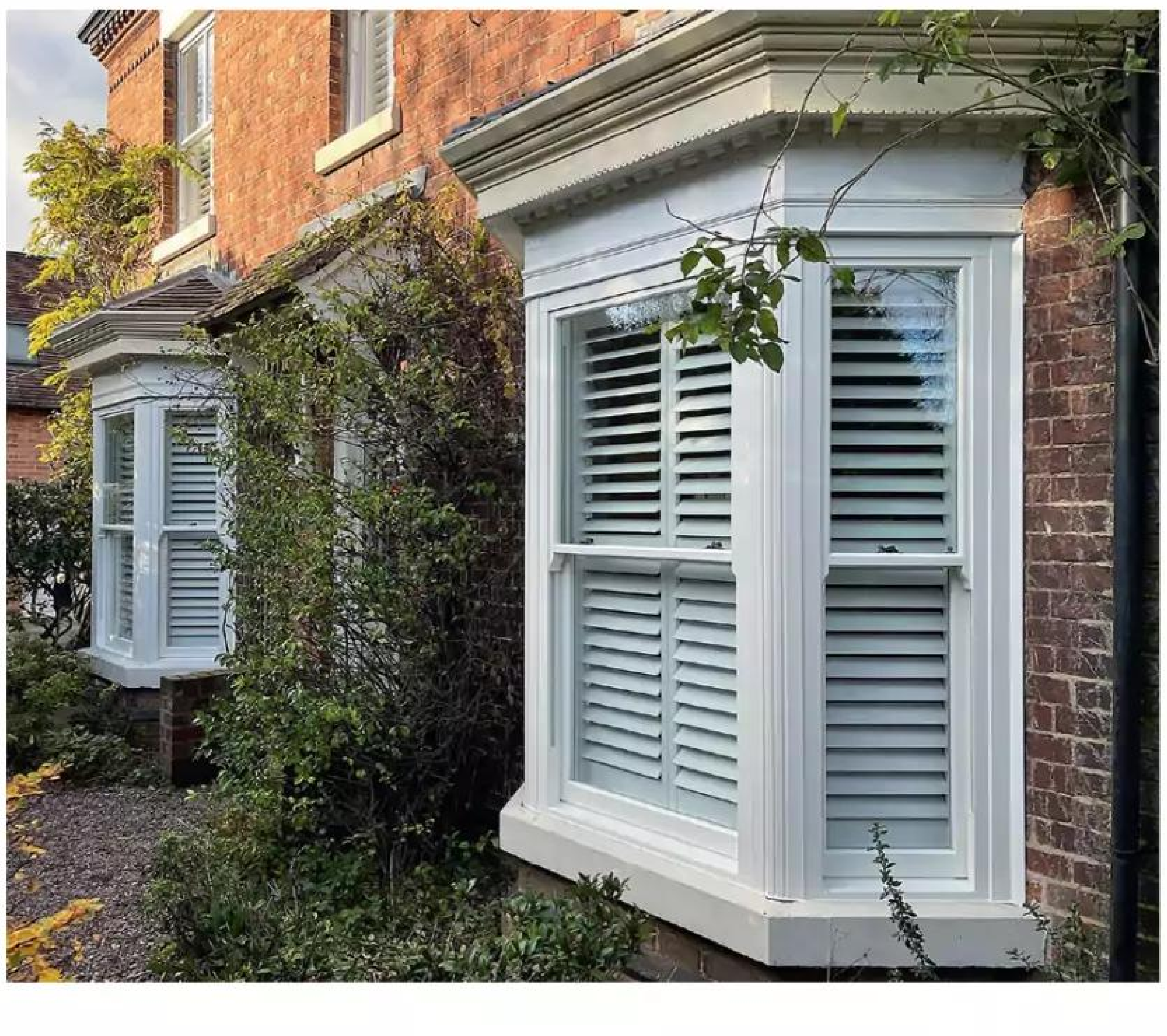
For replacement windows, the exact wording in the regs is that ventilation should not be "less satisfactory than before the work was carried out." So, you don't technically have to include trickle vents if they're not already there – although it's a sensible move if there are already signs your home struggles with humidity and condensation. If you're envisaging chunky bits of plastic inside and out, the good news is that, since the 2022 updates to the regs, many manufacturers have worked on developing more discreet solutions. Trickle vents can be retrofitted to existing windows, too.

3 Investigate positive input ventilation

While it's no longer referenced as an option for new homes under Building Regs Part F, positive input ventilation (PIV) does have a place in existing houses – particularly leaky older properties that suffer from condensation and high humidity. Essentially, a fan unit is installed in the loft that draws air from the attic or via a roof vent. This is blown into the house via one or more ceiling grilles to achieve a slight positive pressure, which in turn pushes stale air out through gaps in the building fabric. It's much cheaper and less disruptive to install than centralised mechanical ventilation systems, although you'll still need extract ventilation in kitchens and bathrooms.

4 Improve shading

Part O of the Building Regs currently only applies to new homes – but we can still employ some of its lessons for existing houses. The goal is to maximise solar heat gain in the colder months, while keeping it to a minimum in the hotter parts of the year. Well-positioned, mature deciduous trees can do a great job of this; plumping out to provide shade in summer, while dropping their leaves in time for winter. For a more architectural solution, consider adding



Left: Winner of Best Sash Window at the 2024 Build It Awards, the timber-alternative Ultimate Rose from Roseview Windows is available with a discreet trickle vent that's invisible from outside, preserving its heritage look

Right: Extract fans are essential in bathrooms. Consider upgrading to a dMEV version to provide constant control over humidity levels

Below: The Climate 3000i by Worcester Bosch is a split air conditioning unit that offers an energy efficiency rating of A++ for cooling and A+ for heating

features such as brises soleil (typically slatted horizontal projections) above glazed door runs and external shutters on windows – planning and aesthetics allowing.

5 Add thermal mass

Thermal mass is the ability of a material to absorb, store and release heat. In our homes, it can help to soften peaks of high/low temperature over the course of 24 hours. Many older homes already do this quite well, thanks to a solid brick or stone construction. Renovators can further enhance the effect through their materials choices.

Clay plaster has more thermal mass than gypsum, for instance, while natural insulations such as wood fibre are more thermally massive than plastic-based types. Both are great for older houses, as they're vapour-permeable – preserving fabric's breathability. If you're extending, a thick concrete screed topped with tiles or flags will absorb some of the heat gained through those lovely new glazed doors, and offers a great opportunity to install underfloor heating.

6 Make use of purge ventilation

While this can be done mechanically (for instance with boost functions on extract fans or MVHR), the low-tech option is to open windows and doors to rapidly get rid of hot, moisture-laden air. As we all know, heat rises, so openings near the top of a room or building work best – such as strategically-placed rooflights or toplights above fixed panes in, say, a bathroom.

The extreme version of this is the German Stossluften technique that went viral earlier this year: fully open all your home's for a few minutes each morning and again the evening, even in winter, to shock your home into letting out stale, humid air.

BOSCH
BOSCH

7 Fit extractor fans

It's amazing how many of us live with extractor fans installed decades ago that are on their last legs, chock full of dust, grime and almost impossible to service. Good extraction is vital in kitchens and bathrooms to control moisture, reduce cooking smells and promote better air quality. Modern extractor fans offer functionality such as humidity sensors, and can be incredibly low-noise in operation (look for the Quiet Mark badge).

8 Opt for continuous extraction

Whole-house or centralised mechanical extract ventilation (MEV) does a similar job to PIV. Rather than imparting positive pressure, it works constantly at a very low level to pull stale air out of the building. A fresh supply is drawn in via background ventilation. The ducting required can make it tricky, though not impossible, to retrofit MEV.

Decentralised mechanical extract ventilation (dMEV) is an easy-install alternative, and looks almost exactly the same as standard extractor fans. It runs continuously to provide a quiet, efficient alternative to intermittent versions, keeping a check on humidity and condensation levels.

9 Invest in whole-house ventilation

ISTOCK.COM / YUNAVA1

Centralised mechanical ventilation with heat recovery is the preferred way to aerate energy efficient new build homes. Properly designed and installed, MVHR extracts stale air and provides a controlled, fresh and filtered new supply. Plus, it recovers up to 95% of the outgoing warmth, boosting the performance of your heating system.

The ducting needed makes it challenging to retrofit in many existing homes. That said, there are property types that are well-suited to retrofitting centralised MVHR: bungalows with a cold roof, for instance, where the unit can sit in the loft and ducts are easily run to ceiling terminals. The same can be done with the upper floor of many two-storey homes; although getting ducting down to the ground floor is more disruptive. If you're already planning to gut the house, it becomes much easier. A combination of centralised and decentralised (single-room or dMVHR) systems can be effective in some situations.

10 Consider an aircon system

When it comes to cooling, nothing's quite as effective as air conditioning, which offers quick response times thanks to a high turnover of air. Aircon is essentially an air-to-air heat pump, so it can also deliver space heating.

Multi-split versions combine an outdoor unit (where the heat is exchanged) with multiple indoor units, allowing you to install outlets in several rooms. In cooling mode, they'll extract heat from inside the house and expel it, recirculating the now chilled air. When heating, warmth is taken from outside and transferred to the room's air.

Note that aircon doesn't offer ventilation; it simply recirculates the existing air – albeit with filtration. So, you'll be relying on background ventilation to maintain a healthy air quality. You'll need another method to deliver domestic hot water, too, though some systems can be supplied with a heat recovery unit for a more joined-up approach.

An alternative is to go for a whole-house solution, such as The Unico System, which provides centralised aircon (rather than single-room) via smaller-diameter, flexible ductwork to enable easier installation in existing properties. The tech has evolved to integrate efficiently with a range of other systems – such as heat pumps and hot water coils – to provide full control of your home's internal climate.

CONTACTS **Blauberg** 01162 160650 www.blauberg.co.uk **BPC Ventilation** 028 2827 5150 www.bpcventilation.com **Envirovent** 01423 810810 www.envirovent.com **Paul Heat Recovery** 01383 221255 www.paulheatrecovery.co.uk **Solarcrest** 0845 833 0388 www.solarcrest.co.uk **Roseview Windows** 01234 712657 www.roseview.co.uk **Total Home Environment** 0345 260 0123 www.totalhome.co.uk **The Unico System** 01384 422094 www.unicosystem.co.uk **Worcester Bosch** 0330 123 9559 www.worcester-bosch.co.uk

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WHOLE HOUSE MVHR - SINGLE ROOM MVHR - DESIGN & SUPPLY

SIMON MAXWELL

This striking Bauhaus-inspired family home in Hampshire is constructed from an insulated concrete formwork system from ICF Homes. Designed by LA Hally Architect, ICF was the right build route for the owners, as it ensured quick construction on their restricted site

Scarlett Deamer examines the key features of this innovative structural system to see if it could be the right choice for your self build project

GUIDE TO BUILDING WITH ICF

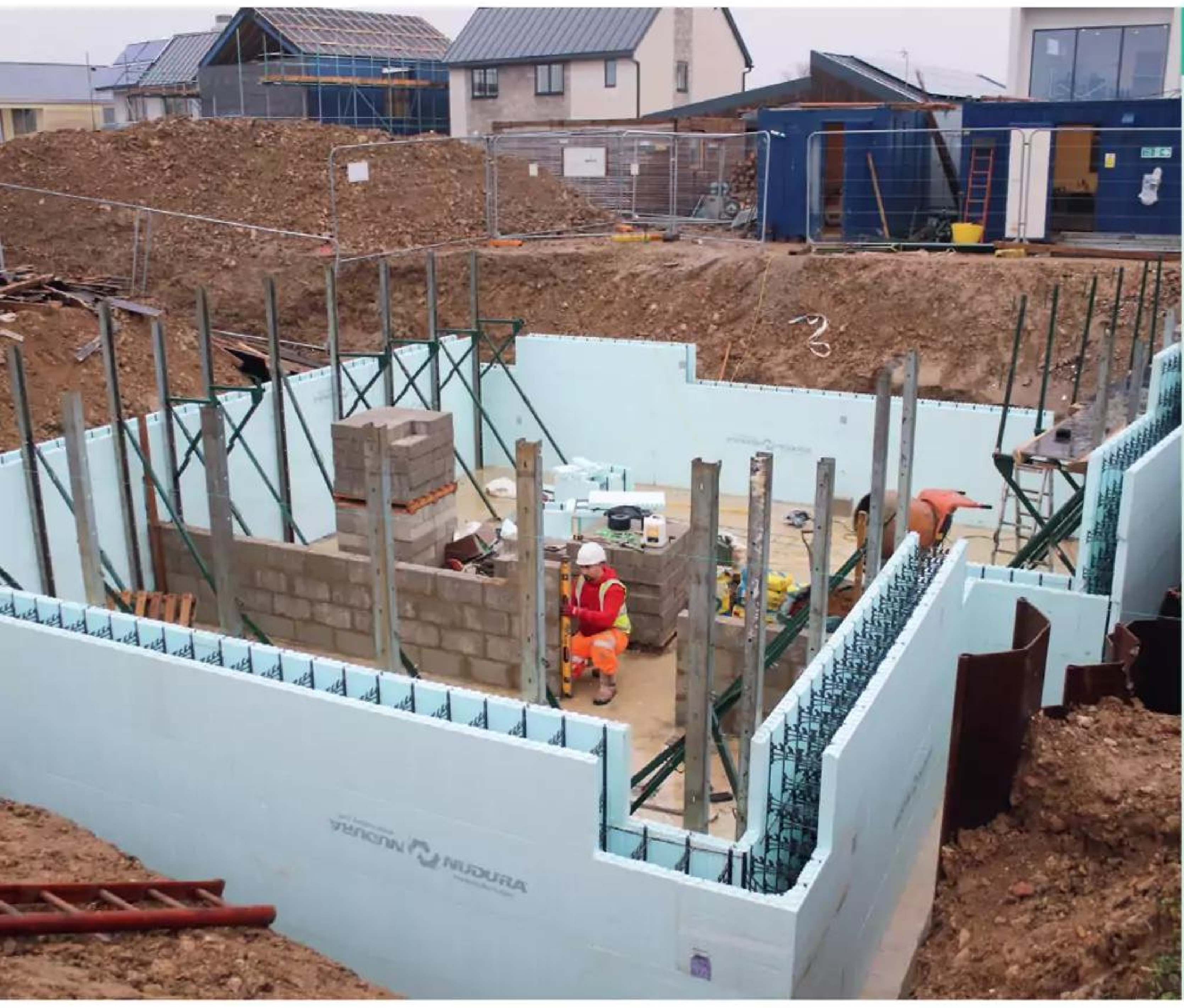
Insulated concrete formwork, or ICF, is a modern construction method that offers a host of benefits, especially for those who are looking to create a robust, low-energy home. But, how can you decide if this is the best route for your self build? In this guide, I'm exploring how ICF works, the designs that can be achieved and what to consider when getting started on site.

What is ICF?

This building method uses a series of hollow blocks or panels, typically made from expanded polystyrene with interlocking profiles, to form the walls of the superstructure, both above and below ground. As the blocks are stacked, steel reinforcing bars are added to the core, before the formwork is braced and filled with a ready-mixed concrete. This is then repeated floor by floor, and once the concrete has cured, you're left with an airtight, super strong and highly insulated structure.

The formwork tends to be constructed using two man methods. "Modular ICF systems, which are pre-made blocks that stack very much like Lego; and non-modular types that have independent components," says Lisa Trewin, owner and director at R-Wall.

ICF is a sturdy construction material, making it a great choice for building external walls, foundations, retaining walls and even creating basements – which benefit hugely from ICF's soundproof nature and ability to be made watertight easily and cost-effectively.



Above: The shell for the Build It Education House's 80m^2 basement was installed, fully insulated and ready to fit-out internally for £78,800 (£985 per m^2)

COMMON QUESTIONS

Q HOW IS THE ROOF CONSTRUCTED?

ICF can accommodate virtually any roof style and pitch. The roof structure is normally connected to the building via a timber wall plate, which is cast in or pinned into the concrete core at the top of the main walls. An ICF hanger system can also be used to create flat roofs and parapets.

Q CAN YOU USE ICF FOR INTERNAL WALLS?

Absolutely! They can be formed alongside the overall structure, making the rooms well insulated and soundproof. However, because ICF walls are relatively thick, this can eat up some of your available floorspace. Try using blockwork and stud walls internally to minimise wall depth.

Q HOW ARE WINDOW AND DOOR OPENINGS FORMED?

Prior to concreting, breaks are created as the formwork system is assembled. The exposed cavity is then filled with an insulated closer, which prevents any thermal bridging. A lintel is formed over the top, with rebar then placed above the opening to provide additional strength, prior to the pour.

Finding the right team

For any build route, it's always advisable to engage with a designer, engineer and builder who are familiar with the method you're using. "Modular ICF can require specialist knowledge, so my advice would be to contact your supplier for a list of recommendations," says Lisa. This will not only ensure construction goes smoothly, but also gives you the best chance of getting the most out of the design options and thermal credentials ICF can offer.

"The Insulated Concrete Formwork Association (ICFA) provides guidance on both architects and builders who are experienced with ICF construction," says Robin Miller, managing director at Beco Wallform. This is a great place to start your search and gives you extra reassurance that your build is in safe hands. Most ICF suppliers offer training for contractors, as well as for self builders who want to better understand the system or perhaps even take a hands-on roll in the works themselves.

Designing your project

Even though ICF is built around rectangular blocks, this doesn't mean you are restricted to a linear design. "The formwork can be assembled according to any shape or design style," says Robin. As the concrete can be reinforced with steel bars, it's possible to create stunning cantilevers and other wow-factor features. "Depending upon the system used, curves are also achievable," says Ian Armstrong, director at Arco2 Architecture. ICF's ability to hold expansive glazing and mould generous open-plan areas, means you can realise a range of styles.

Alongside this, external finishes such as modern silicone renders can be applied directly to the ICF blocks, offering a speedy route to achieving a stylish finish.

Low-energy homes

The system's pre-insulated walls and full-fill continuous concrete pour offers excellent U-values and airtightness for your finished home. Due to its mixture of polystyrene blockwork and solid concrete, you get a twin skin of insulation and plenty of thermal mass. Combined with the interlocking profiles minimising air leakage, ICF is a great choice for anyone aiming to achieve Passivhaus standard.

JACK LODGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Beco Wallform and Western Design Architects (www.westerndesignarchitects.com) created this sympathetic ICF house, beautifully clad in Shaftesbury Greensand stone. The structure was so easy to construct that it was built by just two individuals

When it comes to eco credentials, there are some naysayers. "The biggest drawback is embodied carbon because of the use of concrete," says Ian. As the cement industry is one of the largest producers of carbon dioxide, and plastic is used to create the formwork, ICF doesn't seem a very sustainable option at first glance. However, "newly released British Standards BS8500 means suppliers can offer low carbon concretes," says Lisa. Materials like woodcrete and hempcrete blocks can be used instead of polystyrene to boost eco credentials, too.

On site benefits

The polystyrene blocks are lightweight, easy to handle and simple to cut with a standard handsaw. Plus they do not need mortar to be set in position. The ground floor formwork for a standard, rectangular house can be installed, reinforced, braced and poured with concrete in as little as a week – ready to move on to the next storey. Most self builds, of course, are a bit more complex – but

MATTHEW HERITAGE

Ladybird Farm by Arco2 Architecture

Based on traditional vernacular Cornish farm buildings, the design of this house fuses a mix of stone, timber and copper cladding to bring texture and vibrancy to the exteriors, while the kinked form helps to take full advantage of the plot's panoramic views. Cornish ICF system R-Wall was chosen for the walls and ground floor, delivering a structure that's free of thermal bridges and has excellent airtightness. Annual carbon emissions are just $15kWh/m^2$ per year – around a tenth of the average house. Designed by Arco2 Architecture, the impressive project won Best ICF Home at the 2024 Build It Awards.

ICF should still deliver great construction speeds on site, meaning follow-on trades can start quicker, too.

However, while in principle this construction method offers great build speeds, it has to be done precisely. A good contractor will take particular time and care over bracing the blocks before the concrete pour, to ensure there's no risk of bulging or bursting. Also, the concrete must flow into position continuously, otherwise your home will not be as insulated, airtight or sturdy as it can be.

Making changes later

If you need to make alterations to the poured concrete structure on site, this can add considerable delay and cost – so it's vital to nail construction details early, and make sure they're correctly realised on site. "More often than not, a C35 concrete mix is used in ICF systems. This has 35 Newtons of strength, which is four times as strong as a block used in standard construction," says Lisa.

Cutting into concrete requires hard labour and specialist machinery, and this is exactly where costs can add up. "A strong diamond drill or saw is the most practical means of cutting though the core of the wall," says Robin. Any construction project benefits from good planning, and it's much more efficient to ensure you are happy with the position of services (which should be ducted out prior to the pour), window and door locations and room configurations before the concrete fill goes ahead.

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NEED TO KNOW

Lights kitchen

SMART HOMES

WORDS: CHRIS BATESMITH & ANNA-MARIE DESOUZA

If you want greater comfort, convenience and control over your living environment, then a home automation system will prove a great investment. Here's how to get it right

Above: Niko Digital Black is a sleek, discreet wall touch screen and thermostat. It provides a user-friendly interface for the Niko Home Control system and enables you to control up to 12 functions in one go via pre-set scenes

Smart home technology has come on leaps and bounds over the past few years, so it's no surprise that more and more self builders and renovators are finding ways of incorporating it into their everyday lives and their home's infrastructure. All houses need at least a basic level of heating, lighting and security. Smart home tech, however, can give you maximum control over how the building runs – enhancing comfort levels and convenience, boosting efficiency and saving you money on bills in the long-term.

Getting it right is all about integrating devices that will improve how you interact with your property. "A real smart home should make life easier and give you more time for living, rather than cluttering up your day with tech gimmicks you have to babysit," says Philipp Schuster from Loxone. So, what do you need to know when it comes to specifying a successful smart home setup?

What can a smart home do?

There are many advantages to making the switch from traditional to smart electrics, not least the level of control you gain over your living environment. The key is to plan for this from the start of your project, so that – even if you don't add all the bells and whistles right now – you know the infrastructure is there to readily plug into in future.

A well-designed and seamlessly integrated automation system has the potential to transform the way you interact with your property. Broadly speaking, smart technology can be divided into six key areas: heating/ventilation; lighting/shading; audio visual; security; kitchen/bathroom; and accessibility. You might cherry-pick just a few of these elements or choose to bring them all together in one whole-house package. And, of course, some of them will overlap. Here are just a few of the great features a smart home can offer:

- **Efficiently regulate comfort levels** – smart homes go beyond programmable heating cycles; the most intelligent systems can optimise energy consumption, respond dynamically to your usage patterns, anticipate heat loads based on external temperatures, offer pre-heating when you're on the way home and more. Mechanical ventilation systems, electric rooflights and blinds can all be integrated into the setup, too, with the potential to respond to internal air quality, sunlight levels etc.
- **Set lighting moods at the touch of a button** – with far fewer wall switches than in a traditionally-wired house. For example, your kitchen-diner might have options for cooking, working at the island or dining table, entertaining and more. Your system can even be setup to supply motion-detected dimmed

lighting overnight, so you can pop to the loo or get ready for an early start at work without waking up everyone else in the house.

- **Enjoy multi-room AV** – stream high-quality sound across different rooms simultaneously or individually, controlled via your smart phone or voice assistant. Options include being woken up by your favourite playlist or radio station, and music starting up when you enter the house. If you're looking to create a home cinema experience, it's worth working with a specialist in this area.
- **Enhance security and convenience** – bolster your home's defences with video doorbells, keyless entry, motion-sensing cameras, door and window sensors, and more. This can include remote control and real-time alerts on your phone. A popular option is to have a 'leave/enter the house' button that shuts down and secures your home when you exit, and wakes it up again when you return.
- **Make your home more accessible** – one of the biggest benefits of smart tech is that it can enable people to live independently for longer. Voice and touch screen controls reduce the need to physically interact with sockets, switches and appliances, for instance, while automating tasks such as adjusting temperatures and light levels can help to create a more comfortable, connected and inclusive home environment.

System design

When planning your smart home, start by considering who will live in the property, both now and in the future, and what their needs might be. Think about how each person enjoys music or streams TV, for instance, who works or studies from home, what security provisions might be useful and what lighting controls are required.

Ideally, you should be developing your brief at the design phases of your wider project – not after you've got planning or started knocking through walls. "Be clear on your objectives and essentials to begin with," says Darren Palmer, director of sales at Baulogic. A good smart home specialist will be able to help you identify your must-haves and like-to-haves, as well as options that you may not have considered to ensure each room and the overall system deliver for your budget.

"It's best to work backwards when planning," says Jake Stephens, technical director at HiiLife. "Start by considering what room functionality is required. Once this is clear, the design phase can progress to what cabling infrastructure is needed, to ensure the equipment works effectively. This is the backbone of the system."

Wired vs wireless

Self builders creating a new home from scratch should look to integrate high-quality wiring (Cat6a offers great speed and bandwidth) from the outset. The cheapest cables an electrician will ever run are those installed when the building is still open – at first fix phase, before the plasterboard and finishes go on. So, it's worth adding additional infrastructure in now, even if you don't think you'll use it straight away, as this will make it cheaper to bolt on extra functionality in the future.

Above: Gartec's Artico HomeLift Compact was recognised as Best Home Technology Product in the 2024 Build It Awards. The judges were impressed by the starting price of £18,500 – making it a credible option for those with mobility limitations to install a quality lift that means they can stay in their homes rather than having to move

For existing homes, unless you're gutting the place, retrofitting all that cable is likely to prove too disruptive. Thankfully, the latest generation of wireless smart home products – whether Wi-Fi, Zigbee or RF (radio frequency) – offer a high-quality, secure and robust alternative to hard-wiring. Theben's LUXORliving is a case in point: a radio-based solution that offers an impressive suite of functions via the robust, future-proof and expandable KNX communication protocol. The likes of Quinetic even offer kinetically powered switches, so there's no need for any power supply to them (not even a battery).

Fully-wired systems have the edge for performance and functionality, but wireless is a great alternative. In fact, it can make sense to combine the two – eg if you want to expand a wired setup without running new cables.

Compatibility & futureproofing

At the heart of a successful smart home is simplicity and seamless integration; and that should go both for the

Left: The Swann Buddy4K, priced at £169.99, is a video doorbell and chime that can either be connected to the existing wiring or powered by a rechargeable battery. Added extras include heat and movement sensors, along with infrared night vision

Solar PV
& battery storage

BUYING & SELLING A SMART HOME

With more of us moving towards integrating technology into our living environments, the number of smart houses changing hands on the property market is growing fast. Depending on the complexity of the install and whether the seller is intending to take any of it with them (more likely in a wireless setup), there can be a bit of work to do to get a house ready for a new owner. This includes:

- Disabling the existing homeowners' administrative access to all smart devices that will be remaining in the house.
- Deciding whether any hubs, devices etc are to be taken by the current owner. If you're selling, replacing RF light switches, for instance, may not be worth the cost and time. You should always leave the property in a functional state for the buyer.
- Ensuring everyone's aware of what technology's staying and what's going (some systems generate a digital connection map that could be shared), along with all relevant instruction manuals etc.
- Letting the buyer know if future-ready cable runs are present.
- Resetting every remaining item to its factory defaults.
- Reconfiguring the system and all devices to suit the new homeowners' priorities and usage patterns.

In some cases, it may make sense to work with the original installer to navigate this process. A high-end whole-house system, for instance, could take several days to prepare for handover – something that's not likely to be top of your busy to-do list when you're moving.

Wiser is a wireless heating control system, ideal for retrofitting and capable of controlling radiators, underfloor heating and (via a smart heat switch) electric radiators – with eco and away modes available to help save energy

Above: Lighting scenes, energy-saving temperature control, automated shading and door entry were key criteria for this project by Theben

Above right: Moss Technical supplied the Niko system for Build It's Self Build Education House (www.buildit.co.uk/ourhouse). The main panel (left), is the brain, talking to all the control panels and devices via Bus cabling

initial install and any future upgrades. "Your technology should feel like a natural part of your home, as opposed to an add-on," says Jake. "All devices should communicate with each other and the control centre, allowing the user to operate the home from one single point."

To maximise compatibility, work with your installer to ensure you're using systems and devices that adhere to widely adopted standards, such as KNX or Matter. These connection protocols enable a range of smart home products to communicate effectively with one another, irrespective of the manufacturer.

Ask, too, about how future upgrades are handled: many suppliers offer free remote firmware updates and troubleshooting, for instance. "As a base package, we recommend focusing on the entrances, living area and landing, with a system that provides heating, lighting and security," says Darren. This can then be built on over time.

Note that some cloud-based services may become chargeable after an introductory period, typically around a year. This is common with doorbells and security cameras.

One critical step for any smart home project is to ensure there's a comprehensive handover with the installer. While the front end is designed to be intuitive, what lies under the hood is often more complex – and if you're reading this magazine, chances are you'll want to know how it all keeps humming, what bits you should and shouldn't adjust yourself, and what to do if you want to add to or alter functionality in future.

CONTACTS

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OPENING UP SPACES

Renovation pro Kate Sandhu shares the key steps when renovating to create open-plan rooms, plus tips for a functional layout

Above right: Designed by LochAnna Handmade Kitchens (www.lochannakitchens.co.uk), this statement island unit with seating provides a clear focal point in the large, open-plan room

Designing generous, open-plan spaces is a hugely popular home improvement trend in the UK. Whether it's a kitchen-diner transformation, a seamless living area, or a reimagined bedroom layout, knocking down walls can bring in more light, improve flow and make your home feel more spacious. But before grabbing a sledgehammer, it's essential to consider whether opening up your plan is truly the best option, and how to execute the project properly. This guide explores the key factors to keep in mind, from initial planning to practical considerations and design choices.

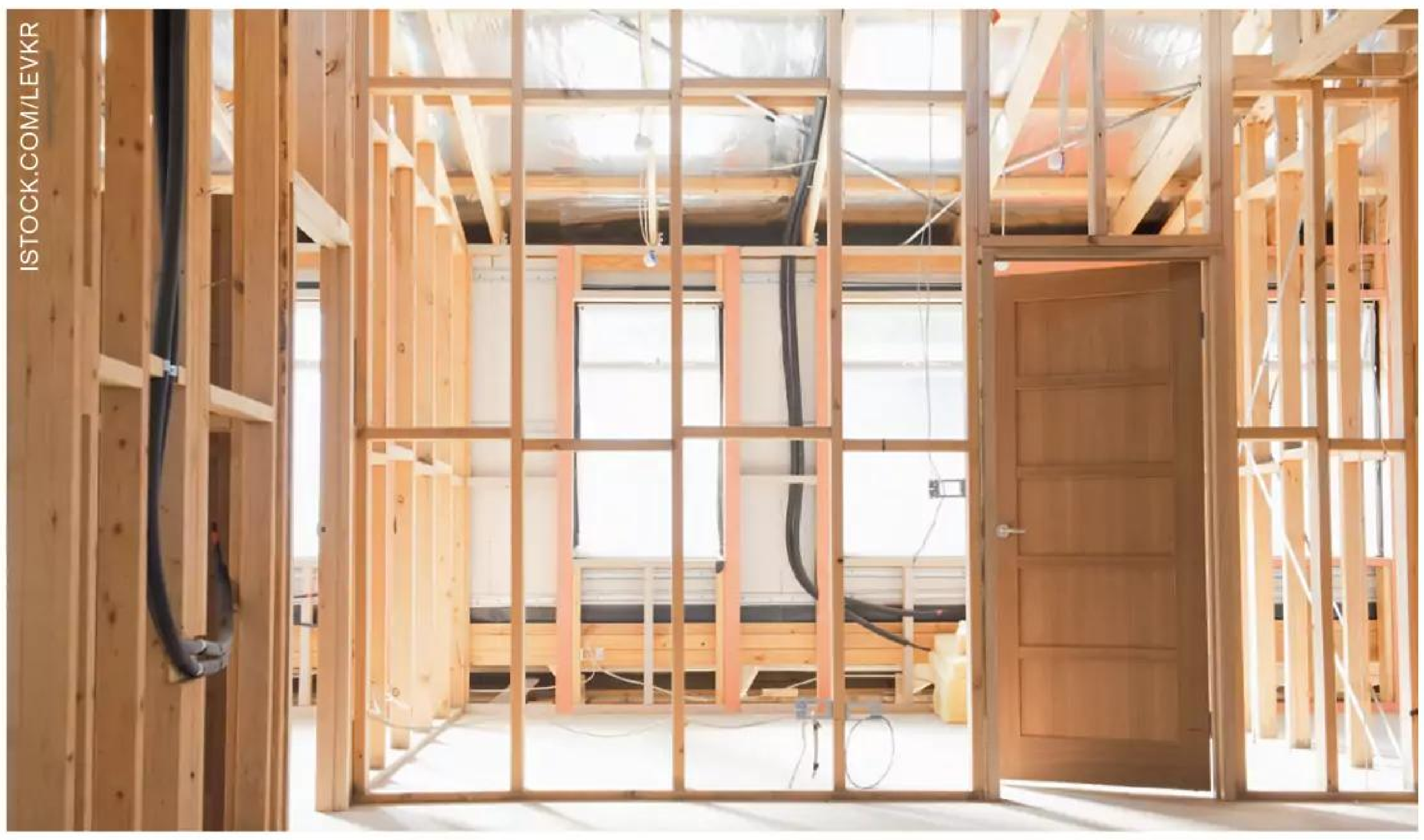
Is knocking through the right choice?

Before committing to breaking down internal walls, it's crucial to take a step back and consider your goals. What are you hoping to achieve? Are there other, less invasive ways to improve your layout? Start by asking yourself the following few questions; do I want a brighter, airier space? Better flow between rooms? Or, a more sociable area for family and friends? Sometimes, opening up a room is the best way to achieve these aims, but in other cases, alternative solutions – such as better lighting, reconfiguring doorways or even extending – might be more effective.

Not every home is naturally suited to large, uninterrupted spaces. Victorian terraces and semi-detached houses often lend themselves well to open-plan living, as they tend to have solid proportions and good ceiling heights. However, in a cosy cottage or period property with lots of charm, taking down too many walls could strip away its character or leave it feeling cold and empty. In addition, opening spaces up can make them more challenging (and more expensive) to keep warm. You may also need to add more or larger radiators, which will increase your costs.

If you're already devising an extension, knocking down walls inside your home could work well alongside your plans. For example, opening up a kitchen-dining area and pushing out into the garden could truly transform the space. However, if you're solely knocking through without adding extra square footage, it's essential to ensure the new layout still provides the practical zones you need.

Below: Timber stud walls are commonly used to divide up rooms. They're quick to install and relatively simple to remove, too – although you should always check if they are load-bearing first



ISTOCK.COM/LEVKR

Construction considerations

Once you've decided to go ahead, there are several key practicalities to bear in mind. Not all walls are the same and removing one could have significant structural and cost implications. Load-bearing walls play a critical role in supporting your home's structure, whether they carry the weight of the floor above or contribute to the overall stability of the building. Even lightweight partitions may have developed a structural function over time, so it's essential to get expert advice before making any changes. It can be easy to check whether a wall is load-bearing by knocking on it. If it sounds hollow then it is often simply a studwork partition with no load-bearing responsibilities – but be sure to have this checked by a professional. If your wall is structural, the process of removal involves:

- **Temporary support** Before demolition, acrow props and strongboys (or a temporary stud wall) must be installed to support the weight above.
- **Demolition** The wall is carefully knocked through in manageable, marked sections.
- **New permanent support** A steel beam (RSJ) or lintel is installed to replace the structural function of the wall that's been removed.
- **Plastering and making good** Once the new support is in place, the space will need finishing with plasterboard, skimming and decorating.

In most cases, you'll need to hire a structural engineer to calculate the size of the beam, and a builder to carry out the work. Plus, it's likely you'll also require building control approval. You can check this with your local authority, who manage these regulations at a local level.

For simple stud partition walls the process is less complex and, while dusty, mostly involves knocking the plasterboard and timber out, before making good any gaps or holes where the walls had previously connected.

The cost of knocking through a wall varies depending on factors like whether it's load-bearing, the size of the opening, and whether additional works (such as rerouting electrics or plumbing) are required. As a rough guide:

- Removing a non-loadbearing wall will cost from **£800-£1,500**, subject to design complexity.
- For removal of a loadbearing wall (with an RSJ installed) look to budget **£2,000-£5,000**.
- Full project costs, including finishing and redecorating will start at **£3,000-£10,000+**, depending on the completed look you want to achieve.

Creating a successful layout

Once the structural work is done, the success of your open-plan setup depends on thoughtful design. Having a clear vision for your space is essential and it's always helpful to create a list of wants and needs before pinning down a firm brief. For more complex projects, you may require professional design services. This could include:

A measured survey to ensure accurate planning. Completed by a suitable professional, this accurately depicts a room or entire home, including level changes, doorways, windows etc down to the millimetre. It's essential for more complex projects but may not be necessary if you're only changing a single room. Approximate costs for a comprehensive measured survey of a three bedroom semi-detached house in the UK are £800-£1,500.

Section drawings to show structural changes may be required by your builder when taking out supporting walls and altering the structure. A structural engineer will generally be needed to calculate the wall being removed, plus size and load-bearing capacity of the steels that will go in its place.

Floorplans to map out the new layout will help you to see how things look and fit together. It's a good idea to try and draw true-to-size furniture in the space so you can get an idea of how everything will fit, as well as how you'll live in and use the space on a daily basis.

For simpler projects, if you have an idea of the current space and how you would like it to look then you can do much of this yourself by searching for similar projects on Build It's website (www.self-build.co.uk), where you can find real-life projects and house plans. You could also look on your local authority's online planning database for inspiration. If you need to illustrate things for a builder, you can hand draw it using a scale ruler or an app such as SketchUp to recreate the current floorplan and then draw on the changes.

Integrating the supporting structure

When thinking about creating your open-plan space, it's important to consider how you'll integrate the new support needed. If an RSJ is required, you can hide it within the floor structure, which means that it won't be on show and will make the new space look seamless. But on the flip side, this means more work, and inevitably, additional costs. To effectively hide an RSJ you'll often need to take up the floor of any room above, impacting another part of the house and causing more disruption.

Another option is to leave the RSJ exposed, which often works well for more industrial-style interiors and can be used as a design feature. You'll need to paint the beam with fire retardant paint but it can often add character to a space. Don't forget that the beautiful wooden beams we often admire in period properties were (and still are) installed for functional reasons, used to hold up ceilings and floors rather than as a primary design choice.

Floor levels & transitions

If different rooms originally had varying floor heights, removing walls may create uneven levels. Though levelling the space out can create a seamless look, it can often be expensive as it may mean removing material, digging down and changing plumbing, electrics and pipework. Some popular options for incorporating varied raises include:

Creating defined zones with different levels. For instance, a slightly raised platform can define a seating

Above: Claire Garner Design Studio (www.clairegarnerinteriors.com) delivered the fit-out and finishes for this stunning open-plan living space. Soft furnishings carefully divide the kitchen and living areas while discreet pocket doors add flexibility to the plan. An eye-catching rooflight, plus pendant lights, zone off and highlight the dining area

Above: Designed by Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects (www.b-vds.co.uk), a series of full-height glazed doors make this home's floorplan feel open, while maintaining some separation between rooms

FIRE SAFETY

In the UK, creating an open-plan layout can have implications for fire regulations, particularly regarding escape routes and containment. Always consult a building control officer or fire safety expert before proceeding with knocking through. Here are the key elements to consider:

ESCAPE ROUTES & FIRE DOORS If you are removing walls that previously separated staircases from living spaces, this has fire risk implications. For two-storey homes, an open-plan layout on the ground floor is generally allowed, but if the stairs lead directly from an open space, you may need to install fire-resistant partitions, doors or suppression (sprinkler/misting) systems. For three-storey homes, regulations are stricter, requiring a protected stairwell, suppression and escape windows.

FIRE-RESISTANT MATERIALS Any structural alterations must use materials that meet fire safety standards, typically providing 30 minutes of fire resistance. This applies to new walls, floors and ceilings that separate living spaces from escape routes.

SMOKE & HEAT ALARMS Interlinked smoke alarms are required on each level, and a heat detector is needed in the kitchen. Alarms should be mains-powered and include battery backup.

SPRINKLER SYSTEMS In certain cases, especially in larger open-plan layouts that affect your fire escape routes, a domestic sprinkler or misting system may be required to meet the regulations.

BUILDING CONTROL APPROVAL Any major structural changes affecting fire safety must comply with Building Regulations (Approved Document B) and some changes may require approval from your local authority or an approved inspector to ensure compliance.

area, while a lower level can house the dining or kitchen space. This approach works well in loft-style homes or open-plan living rooms with multiple functions.

Install a sunken living area to add character to an open-plan space. By intentionally lowering part of the floor, you create a cosy, intimate area for relaxation while maintaining an open feel which can be highlighted with built-in seating or a well-considered lighting scheme.

Use different flooring materials to help define the uses of distinct zones and make the transitions feel intentional. For example, you can use wood in one section and tiles or polished concrete in another. This helps visually separate spaces while making the differences in level feel like part of the design scheme rather than a flaw.

Use built-in furniture to work with differing tiers and turn an uneven floor to your advantage. Say that you had one area that is higher, you could add built-in bench seating, shelving, or a raised platform bed. This approach not only maximises the use of space but also turns the level difference into a practical design feature.

Fit-out choices

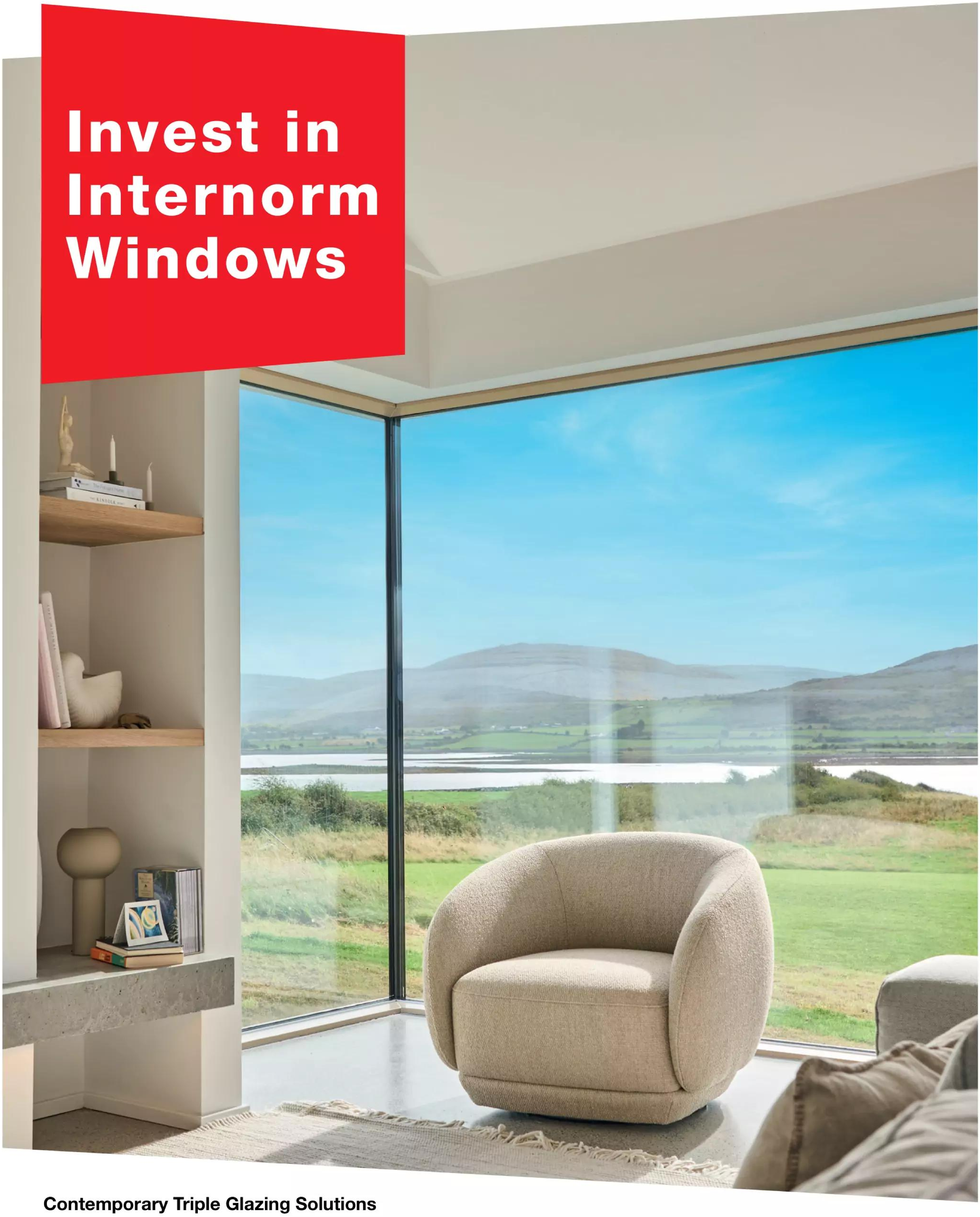
When kitting out an open-plan living space, decisions will be impacted by numerous factors, including what the area is being used for and whether you have different levels or zones. This will influence whether you go for a uniform look or use different flooring types. Using consistent flooring will create a seamless, spacious effect, making the room seem much larger than it is. Switching materials can really help zone a space and define separate areas; you might go for tiles in the kitchen and wood in the living area. This should also be influenced by practicality; you may wish to have tiles in the kitchen and something warmer, such as wood with a rug, in the living spaces. You may also be influenced by existing features that you wish to preserve.

Lighting can really help open-plan spaces feel cohesive, especially those with varied levels. You can be clever with your setup, using the same style throughout but having lighting on separate rings to switch different zones on and off. Pendant lights, recessed lighting or LED strips along steps can help differentiate sections while maintaining a sense of unity. Consider the space's main functions; for example, highlight different areas with task lighting in work zones and softer lighting in relaxation areas. Finally, maintaining a consistent colour palette and furniture style throughout the space helps tie everything together.

A downside of open-plan living is increased noise but you can use some simple tricks to reduce sound transfer. Solutions can include installing acoustic plasterboard or insulation within remaining walls; choosing soft furnishings (rugs, curtains, upholstered furniture) to absorb sound or zoning strategies such as half-walls or significant shelving units to define spaces without fully enclosing them.

KATE SANDHU

Kate Sandhu is a renovation pro, helping others to understand the process and save as much money as possible via her home renovation course. She shares a wealth of knowledge, as well as DIY tips, via her blog renovatelikekate.com and Instagram account @renovatelikekate



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The case for basements in new homes

Project management expert **Mark Stevenson** explores the benefits of incorporating a subterranean zone in your home design, and shares his expertise on how to ensure a successful and cost-effective scheme

Top: A project by Surrey Basements (www.surreybasements.co.uk) at waterproofing stage, during installation of an internal cavity drainage membrane (CDM) system

When designing a new home, a significant challenge that many self builders face is how to maximise space within a limited plot size. With land becoming more expensive and harder to find, basements are a great solution to help achieve the room you need.

A subterranean addition provides extra living space without increasing the footprint of the main house. They're common in many countries but in the UK they haven't been so popular, due to perceptions about cost and complexity. When planned correctly, however, a basement can be a good investment, delivering valuable square footage to create your dream home design.

Why a basement is a good investment

On tight plots where space is at a premium, digging down is a clever choice. Instead of sacrificing garden area for a larger footprint, a basement allows you to keep your outdoor space and gain more rooms below ground.

This type of zone is well-suited to a great range of uses, offering excellent flexibility. They can be used for home cinemas, gyms, playrooms, hobby areas or even provide the ideal spot for a plant room, keeping noisy equipment like heat pumps and ventilation systems out of the main living areas.

In some cases, a basement can be an efficient and cost-effective design choice. On sites with poor ground conditions, deeper foundations are often required anyway. If piling or deep trench fill foundations are needed, adding a below-ground structure can be a relatively small extra cost for a lot more living space.

Many countries, including the US, Canada and much of Europe include basements in standard residential construction. The UK has been slower to adopt them, mainly due to historical building practices and concerns about groundwater management. In many parts of Britain, homes were traditionally built with shallow strip foundations, so basements were less common. But modern waterproofing technologies have largely overcome previous concerns about damp, making this type of living space more viable than ever.

The design & build process

Building a basement starts with a site appraisal, followed by the development of a detailed design. The first step is a ground investigation, which assess soil conditions and groundwater levels. Clay soils, for example, may call for additional structural support, while high water tables will influence waterproofing choices and require drainage systems that make building a basement more complex.

One of the main considerations of basement design is the structure. Retaining walls must be strong enough to withstand the surrounding soil pressure, and temporary earthwork support may be needed during excavation for safety and to allow access for waterproofing. Excavating the area requires space for the necessary machinery, and soil removal must be planned carefully so as not to put extra pressure on the temporary retaining walls.

Key considerations

Any basement project essentially means digging a large hole in the ground, which must be supported sufficiently to prevent collapse. Driven sheet piling, or contiguous piling, are typical temporary support methods. The structural engineer will determine the best option based on the site's soil type, water table and proximity to adjacent buildings.

STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS When building commences, the walls need to be strong enough to withstand soil pressure and keep water out. Here's three common methods of construction:

In-situ concrete is one of the most robust options. Concrete is poured into reinforced formwork, creating a continuous, highly-durable structure. This method works well with waterproof additives, reducing the risk of leaks. But, it's expensive to build, requires skilled labour and careful design to manage joints and avoid cracks.

Reinforced blockwork uses high-strength concrete blocks, which are filled with reinforced concrete for added stability. It's a more cost-effective method and easier to construct, but proper waterproofing is essential, as joints are weak points for water ingress.

Insulated concrete formwork (ICF) is a modern alternative that combines strength with built-in insulation. The polystyrene blocks are stacked like giant Lego bricks and then filled with a waterproof concrete, creating a solid, well-insulated room. ICF is quicker to install, with high levels of thermal resistance, so it is ideal for creating an energy-efficient home.

WATERPROOFING Basement waterproofing is required to prevent damp problems. The Code of Practice for the Protection of Below Ground Structures against Water Ingress sets out the three main methods:

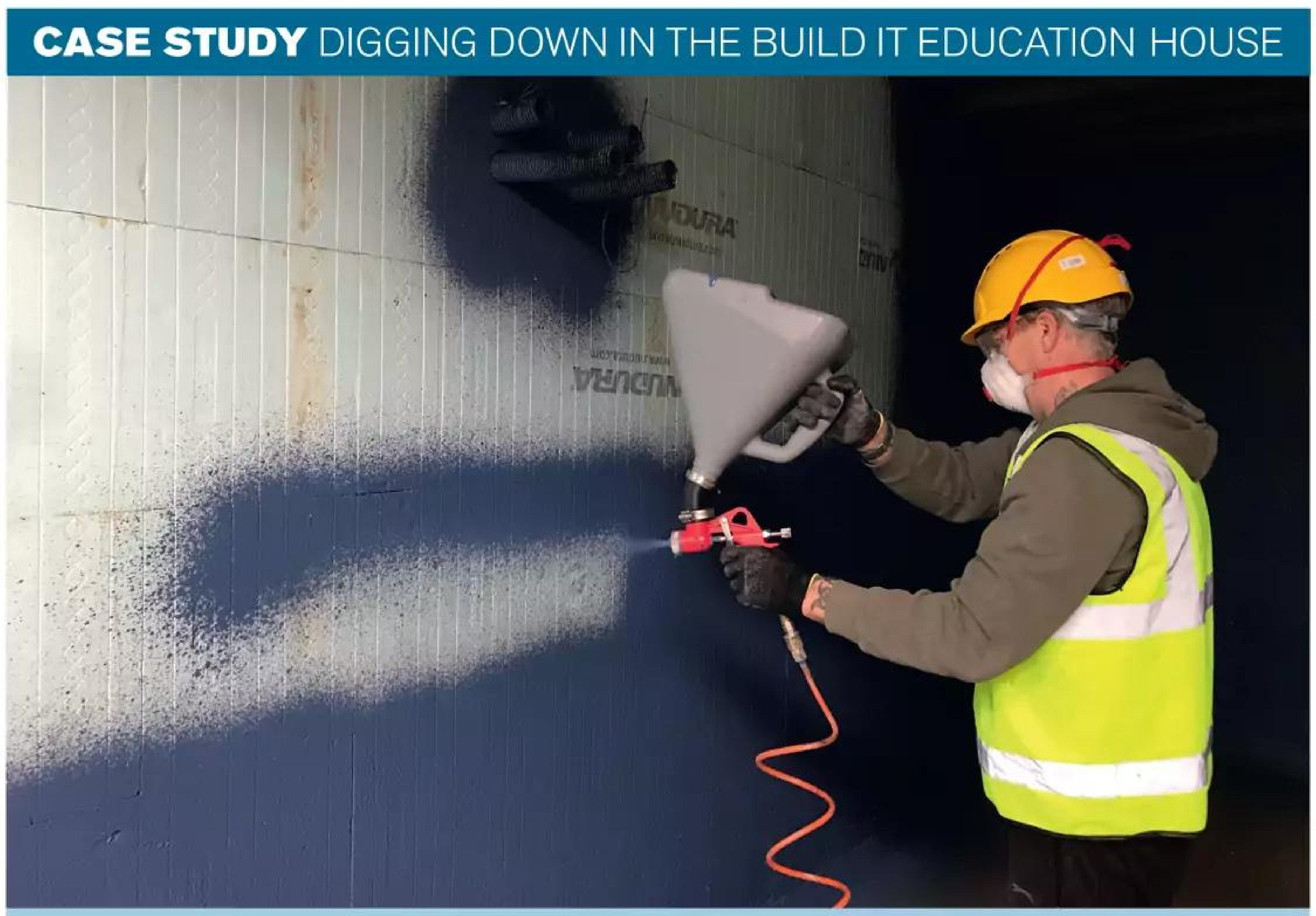
Barrier protection involves external tanking, where a waterproof membrane is applied to the outside of the basement structure. This is the most common strategy, but relies on high standards of workmanship. Issues with adhesion, minor damage or gaps will lead to leaks.

Integral protection where concrete itself is designed to be waterproof, using water-resistant additives. This type of material helps to reduce the risks but isn't foolproof, as cracks and leaks can still occur. If used alone, it's often reinforced with additional coatings.

Drained protection uses a sump pump and internal cavity drainage system to manage any water that penetrates the structure. Cavity drainage is the most reliable method as it manages the water rather than trying to keep it out. The downside is that it requires a pump system, which must also be maintained.

For the majority of self builds, a belt and braces approach is adopted using a combination of these methods to provide reliable, long-term protection.

CASE STUDY DIGGING DOWN IN THE BUILD IT EDUCATION HOUSE



At The Build It Education House project in Graven Hill, the team faced complex clay soil conditions, where piling would typically be required. The cost of piling needed to complete the house design would have been around £48,000 (in 2019). Instead, they opted to put that money towards a basement addition, spending £78,000 on a highly insulated shell, constructed from ICF blocks and waterproof concrete. This meant that an extra 80m² of living space could be created for an additional cost of only £30,000 – the same cost per m² as building the above-ground structure. Not only did this provide a full extra floor, but it also allowed for a more efficient layout, with all mechanical plant housed below ground, freeing up space in the living areas above. Visit www.buildit.co.uk/ourhouse for more information.

Left: Located in the coastal town of Bosham, the Bartschts built their ideal prefabricated home, complete with a basement level that matches the size of the property's ground floor. Delivered by Glatthaar Keller (www.glatthaar.com), it features a plant room, hobby area, extra bathroom, wine room and plenty of storage space. Built in 2019, the 150m² zone cost £149,000

SPECIALIST INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS Basements require tailored cover, both during and after construction. Structural warranties will protect the project against defects for at least 10 years, but most policies require independent inspections during the build itself, plus specialist insurance cover to be in place.

The costs

The price of building a basement will be influenced by waterproofing requirements, ground conditions and the chosen structural system. Based on a £1 per m² basis, they're typically greater than the building cost of an average above-ground house.

Generally, the shell of a subterranean room will cost between £1,500 and £2,000 per m², including the temporary works and the excavation. Fit-out, including ventilation and pumped drainage systems, will add a further £750–£1,500 per m². It's worth noting that on challenging sites with neighbouring buildings and a high water table, waterproofing, drainage and earthwork support will all cost more.

Despite this cost, in the right circumstances a basement can be a cost-effective way to add space and improve the home's functionality without eating into the garden. However, due to their expense they aren't really viable for lower-value houses. For the budget conscious, below-ground rooms only make sense where savings can offset the premium that the addition will cost.

While they do require careful planning and specialist construction techniques, modern waterproofing systems have made basements a viable option, particularly on less complex sites where the home's value can cover their construction cost. Whether you need extra bedrooms, a home cinema, or simply want to keep noisy plant equipment out of your main living areas, a basement can be a great option that improves design flexibility, and helps to create a quieter, more efficient home.

MARK STEVENSON

Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

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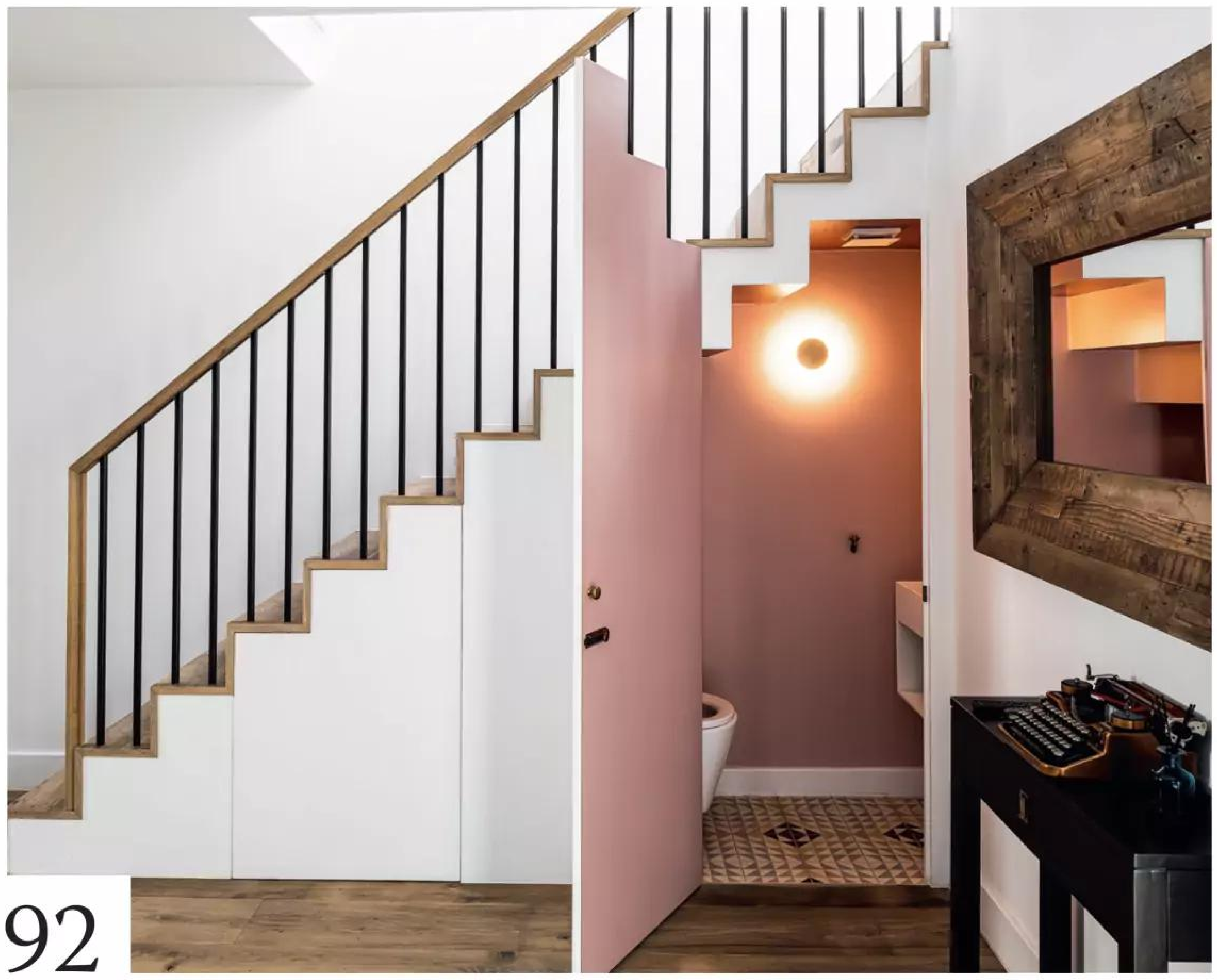

92

80 **MAKING THE MOST OF SOLAR PV**

Self build expert Gerald Cole shares his advice for ensuring you achieve a successful and efficient solar panel setup

84 **GETTING CONSENT FOR AN ANNEXE**

Julia Riddle, Build It's planning expert, investigates how to gain approval for this type of building project

88 **SLIDING DOOR COSTS**

Find out the factors that will dictate how much you'll pay for this glazing system

92 **STAIRCASE DESIGN**

Architect Julian Owen runs through the key considerations for creating a functional and stylish flight

96 **STAIRCASE INSPIRATION**

Find the ideal solution for your home's scheme from a hand-picked selection of impressive design options

PLUS: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED (PAGE 98), LATEST MORTGAGE RATES (PAGE 103), FINDING LAND (PAGE 105) & ARCHITECT'S VIEW (PAGE 130) »

Making the most of SOLAR PV

Drawing on his own experience of living with solar panels, Gerald Cole gives his top tips on how to achieve a high-quality PV install – and what he might do differently 14 years on

Above: Solar PV panels that mimic roof tiles, like these examples from Solex, may allow you to obtain planning permission for arrays in conservation areas and on listed buildings

Sunlight is the UK's most abundant energy source. According to Octopus Energy, it produces an annual average of 100kW per m^2 on flat ground and 110kW on south-facing roofs – all entirely free. Using it to reduce your energy bills and reliance on the national grid requires fitting solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, which convert the light energy into useable electricity. Solar PV is the UK's most popular renewable technology, with over 1.5 million panels currently fitted to homes – my own house being among them. Plus, over 180,000 new installations were recorded last year by the government's Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS). So, if you are considering this tech, how can you make the most of it?

Why I installed solar PV

I'd love to claim unusual foresight for my early take-up of solar panels, but in reality my involvement was pure chance. Back in 2011, my wife and I were finding it exceptionally difficult to book a heating engineer for an unreliable gas boiler in our Dorset holiday home.

When we eventually found one, he told us that he and most other local engineers were fully occupied fitting PV systems to the roofs of local retirees, who had realised that the government's Feed-in Tariff offered much greater returns on their investment than traditional savings accounts. It wasn't long before we invested for our main house in London.

QUICK GUIDE

WHAT GOES INTO A SOLAR PANEL?

All PV panels work on the same principle. They consist of layers of semi-conducting material, usually silicon, which produce an electrical charge when they're struck by sunlight.

The main types of panel are polycrystalline, which is made from silicon fragments, and monocrystalline made from a single silicon crystal. The latter version is more productive, with efficiencies ranging from 17% to 24%. Polycrystalline is 15% to 17% efficient, but cheaper up front, so if you have a large roof it may be the more cost-effective option.

All PV panels produce direct current (DC) which has to pass through an inverter to be converted into the alternating current (AC) used domestically. The inverter – roughly the size of a suitcase – is typically sited in a utility room or garage.

Are PV panels suitable for my new build or renovation?

Solar panels are most productive facing south at an angle between 30° and 40°, which happily matches the standard roof pitches of UK homes. Ideally, your plot or existing property should have a southerly aspect, although roofs that face south-easterly or south-westerly can also work. Even flat roofs can be fitted with solar panels on specially angled brackets.

For an average PV system that produces around 3.5kW at peak efficiency, you will need between $10m^2$ and $20m^2$ of suitable roof space, which equates to between six and 12 panels (depending on the individual panels' output). The stronger the sunlight, the more

Left: Gerald's own south-facing 16-panel 3.04kWp photovoltaic array (right) – complete with pigeons – was installed in 2011, together with his neighbour's 12-panel system, by Treadlighter under the original Feed-In Tariff

power is generated, however, even when the sky is very cloudy, daylight will still be effective.

To maximise production, no panel should be overshadowed by trees, chimneys or neighbouring properties between the hours of 10am and 4pm throughout the year. If this isn't possible, they can be fitted on garages, garden offices or anywhere on your plot that receives sufficient daylight – though you may need to extend the electricity supply.

PV installations count as permitted development, so no planning permission is needed unless you live in a conservation area, a listed building or your panels protrude more than 200mm above the roof height. If you're dealing with a protected property, one option for gaining approval is to opt for specialised solar roof tiles, available from companies like Solex and GB-Sol. These can mimic clay tiles, slate and even textured glass, though they are more expensive than standard units.

Funding for solar panels

A major benefit of PV is the ability to sell electricity you don't use to the grid. Under the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) scheme, major energy suppliers are required to pay a set rate for each kilowatt hour (kWh). Rates vary dramatically, so you may want to consider moving suppliers to take full advantage of the payments.

SEG replaces the old 25-year (later 20-year) Feed-In Tariff, which ran from 2011 to 2019 and offered payments originally for 25 years (later 20 years). Renovators may buy a property where the tariff is still in operation. Originally generous, the Feed-In Tariff is much less so today, but the payments are based on total power produced, not just the amount exported.

How much can I save?

The success of an installation depends on matching your panels' production with your household needs. If, for example, your home is unoccupied during the day, most of the electricity created will go to the grid. The payments you receive for this are substantially less than the grid charges you for electricity. If you work from home, have a young family or are retired, however, bright sunshine is the signal to turn on your most energy intensive items, from washing machines to immersion heaters, which will effectively be free. Smart home systems (an extra investment on top, of course) can also help to manage usage.

In terms of sizing the solar array, you can gain an idea of your requirements with the Energy Saving Trust's solar panel calculator. According to the organisation, a typical 3.5kWp PV panel system (producing 3.5kW of electricity at peak efficiency) will cost around £7,000. Its research suggests this should reduce bills by between £140 and £340 a year. For a homeowner living in the middle of the UK, the Trust reckons it will take between 11 and 13 years to recoup the installation costs.

My own 3.04kWp, 16-panel installation, which was fitted in 2011 under the most generous Feed-In Tariff, took seven years to recoup its £10,000 installed cost. Last year, it generated 1,695kWh – which amounted to just over 70% of our household's total annual electricity use of 2,333kWh (we're unlikely to have used 100% of the solar supply, but do enjoy payments on it from our Feed-In Tariff). In the first year it was installed, the system produced 2,052kWh. The reduction is probably due to a combination of fewer sunny days and expected power output degradation.

Meanwhile, Ofgem suggests that harnessing sunlight could reduce the average UK household's annual electricity consumption of 2,700kWh by at least a third. Broadly speaking, the further south you are located, the more efficient your panels will be. But it's important to

TREADLIGHTER

Below: Flat roofs can also accommodate PV panels using specially angled brackets

THE RISE OF DOMESTIC BATTERIES

As a relatively early adopter of PV systems, would I do anything differently now? I would be seriously tempted by a battery system, potentially in combination with a heat pump – taking advantage of the £7,500 grant under the current Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS), which runs until April 2028, hopefully giving me time to boost my finances accordingly. In the meantime, I would monitor battery prices, which are likely to fall as their use increases, as well as improvements in PV panel efficiency promised by the use of new materials such as perovskite.

A home battery system allows electricity produced by your solar panels to be stored for later use, typically in the evening. It can also store low-cost (night-rate) grid electricity to further optimise bills. A battery is most cost-effective for PV systems over 2.0kWp and owners who can't make full use of their panels during the day.

Battery costs can be close to the price of the PV panels themselves, however, which will extend the period required to recoup your initial investment. You will also need a separate inverter, unless your battery includes one, and a bi-directional smart meter, showing both electricity exported and imported from the grid. PV batteries are usually fitted indoors, but if space is tight then IP66 rated versions are also available that can be installed outside with well-ventilated weather protection, though never in direct sunlight.

The best use of a battery system is with a Time-of-Use tariff, which charges different rates at different times of the day. These are available from major energy providers, including Ovo Energy, British Gas and E.ON. At the time of writing, the most generous is Octopus Energy's Agile Octopus tariff which adjusts its pricing every 30 minutes.

A simpler alternative is to opt for a thermal rather than electrical battery. Here, both PV and cheap rate grid electricity are used to heat a highly insulated thermal store. Tepeo's ZEB boiler uses a solid high-temperature core to provide both central heating and hot water.

TREADLIGHTER

Left: A system's battery and inverter are typically installed in a dry, well-ventilated garage or utility room, though never in attics as their weight and potential for overheating while charging may present a risk

An alternative to battery storage is a thermal store, like this washing machine-sized ZEB from Tepeo (tepeo.com), which can provide heating for both hot water and entire central heating systems

remember that each installation is completely unique, and electricity prices regularly change.

Who should install my PV system?

Both your solar panel system and its installer should be registered under the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS), as you'll need an MCS certificate to qualify for energy providers' SEG schemes. It is also essential to check and ensure that your installer is a member of either the Renewable Energy Consumer Code (recc.org.uk) or the HIES Consumer Code (hiesscheme.org.uk). All three of these organisations list approved contractors across the UK. It's advisable to obtain quotes from at least three different installers, including estimates of the panels' outputs.

Installation should be easiest on a new build, not least because scaffolding is likely to be already in position – plus you can easily opt for a discreet flush-mounted system that sits in line with the roof tiles. On an existing house, fitting a typical array can be a relatively simple matter of lifting roof tiles and securing the mounting structure to the rafters. The installer will first need to check that the roof is in good condition and able to support the desired number of panels.

It's also worth checking if your installer will include bird proofing around the perimeter of the array. Pigeons tend to find the underside of PV panels an attractive nesting spot and their waste is caustic enough to corrode DC cabling. But their interest is unpredictable. My own panels seem unusually attractive, while my neighbour's array, centimetres away, is spurned.

Once installed, solar panels are virtually maintenance free and product warranties of up to 30 years are common. They do lose capacity over time, typically at a rate of around 0.5% to 0.9% per year, but will still produce useful power for up to 40 years. Inverters, however, typically have warranties of between five and 10 years and are likely to need replacing several times over the lifetime of your system.

GERALD COLE

Gerald Cole is an experienced self builder and was the launch editor of SelfBuild & Design magazine. He has over 25 years' experience providing practical advice, based on his own home building experiences, and is the author of Build Your Own Brick House.

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GETTING PLANNING CONSENT FOR AN ANNEXE

Planning expert **Julia Riddle** shares the key steps and common challenges attached to this type of project, including navigating local regulations and presenting your case

Above: This Oakwrights (www.oakwrights.co.uk) annexe features a carefully zoned kitchen, living and dining area, complete with an eye-catching semi-glazed gable

An annexe is a self-contained living space that can be built within the grounds or curtilage of an existing residential property. These buildings are intended to be used as standalone accommodation for family members associated with the main residential dwelling. Unlike a spare room, this type of project is ideal for adding flexibility to your current home, offering privacy and independence when required. The space may include facilities such as a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living area. Here, I'll guide you through the core considerations you need to understand before building your ideal annexe.

Do I need planning permission?

This type of project will always require planning approval. Annexes differ from garden rooms and outbuildings, which are incidental to the use of a dwelling or main residence, and do not always require formal consent. An outbuilding might be used as storage, a summerhouse, home office or gym, but crucially, it could not be lived in without use of amenities in the main house.

An annexe is not and cannot be used as a separate dwelling, but it can be lived in. By definition, it cannot be let, sold or otherwise occupied as a distinct property. There are various tests and considerations that are applied when undertaking this type of project to be sure of this. It would be assumed that the utilities, such as water and energy, would be shared with the main dwelling to which the new annexe is related. The structure would not have its own address, or separate council tax payment. There would be shared use of some facilities with the main house, such as for clothes washing. Essentially, there must be no physical or functional separation of the site and its use from the original property.

The definition of an annexe and its occupancy can be a challenging area. It should be occupied by a family member, but determining the exact boundaries of this definition can be challenging. For example, it can be unclear whether it extends to blood relatives, au pairs or others within the wider family.

In circumstances where there is an existing outbuilding related to a property, it's possible that this could be converted to use as an annexe, without the need for planning permission. Professional advice should always be sought on this to ensure that there are no constraints attached to your site or plans that would prevent the works, before going ahead with the project.

If an outbuilding in another use (for example a home office) was built under permitted development rights originally – ie without planning permission – it cannot usually be converted to an annexe later without requiring formal planning to do so. Likewise, if an outbuilding was permitted with planning permission, always check if there were any conditions attached to that decision that restrict the ability to convert it to an annexe. In each of these circumstances, a planning application would be required for both the change of use of any building to an annexe and for any physical works required to enable this change.

PETER HELME

Above & inset: Build It reader Suzanna Mackey built this impressive contemporary annexe in Cornwall. Created in conjunction with a second renovation to her main home, the project provides a secluded and private space, boasting sea views; the perfect spot to accommodate her family and guests

Key considerations

If you're looking to achieve an annexe for use by a family member, there are a number of important factors to bear in mind during the design and planning phases:

FACILITIES What amenities and key features will your ideal space require? Are there certain facilities that can (and should) be shared with the main house to clearly indicate that this is not a separate dwelling, but rather a space intended for someone related to the occupant of the main dwelling? For example, will the occupant/occupants attend the main home for meals and for washing of clothes on a regular basis, and is there scale and capacity to allow for this? This will also help determine the relative size and form of the annexe, compared to the residential dwelling itself. The new structure would be expected to be considerably smaller in scale than the original property.

ACCESS Is it appropriate to design shared access between the main property and the annexe? Generally, it wouldn't be acceptable for there to be an entirely separate entrance to the new structure. Usually, this would only be the case if you're building a new house on the same site as your existing home. As such, it's most likely that your annexe will share access from the road with your main property, without a separate vehicle route.

PLANNING & CONTEXT As set out previously, it can be assumed that the use of your new space would require planning permission, whether it was a conversion of an existing building or a new construction.

Any physical development – be it a new building or works to an existing structure to facilitate the change of use to an annexe – would also need planning permission. When thinking about the scale, design and appearance of your new space, the same sort of considerations will apply as to any new development. If your site is in a sensitive location, where there are conservation, heritage or landscape considerations, the design and appearance will have to show that it has considered these elements. This can be achieved by using materials that reflect a local palette or by designing the height, form and location on the site to minimise visual impact of the development.

It is beneficial in the first instance to seek some planning input in terms of whether the use of a building or development of a building for an annexe is likely to be

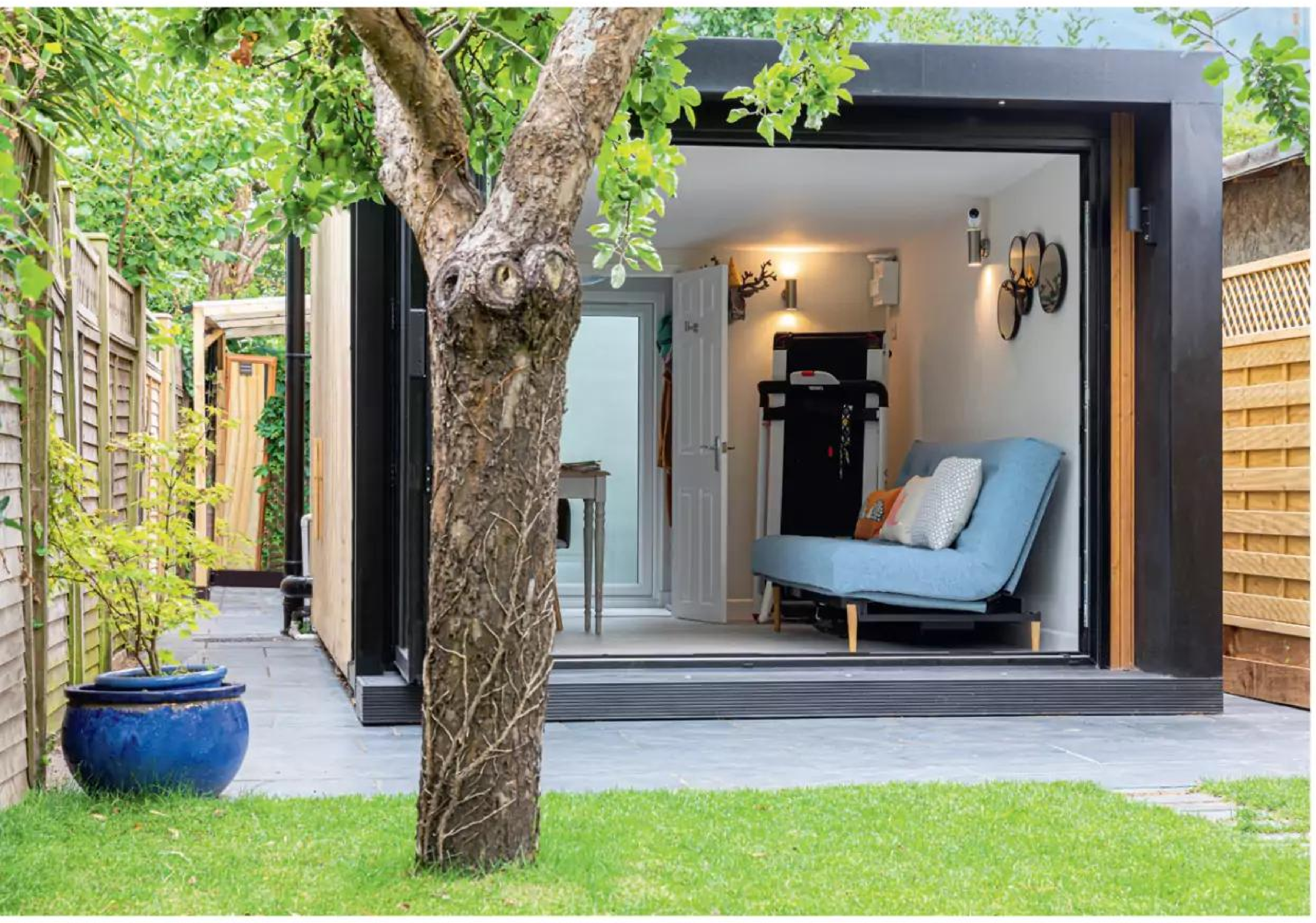
NIKHILESH HAVAL

achievable on your site. You might do this before seeking any design help, or you may want to have an idea of the scale and location of what you're looking to build before seeking outside input. This could either be from a local planning consultant or via a pre-application consultation with your local authority. There are benefits to both, depending on the complexity of your site and plans.

It's important to obtain some advice early on in the process to ensure that you are pursuing the most appropriate route to securing planning permission for the development you are seeking. In this case, there is always going to be a need for some form of approval, so it's crucial to understand the stance that your relevant local planning authority takes towards annexes. Look at other approvals that have been granted locally for this purpose and what constraints or restrictions have been placed on them, for example in terms of scale, use, design and access, to ensure that you can take a similar approach, subject to your own site constraints and goals.

Above: Steve and Janine Carney built this 433m² oak frame annexe attached to their home after their plans to build a new oak frame house in their garden were rejected. Delivered by Welsh Oak Frame (www.welshoakframe.com), the substantial addition is attached to the couple's main property, but there's no direct access between the two spaces internally

Below: The Garden Office (www.thegardenoffice.co.uk) TG03 garden room is constructed with prefabricated insulated walls. Measuring 15m², this model is big enough for a room and ensuite toilet



KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER...

- **An annexe is not an outbuilding** and it will require planning permission. Seek advice early on to ensure you're pursuing the correct route to approval.
- **Your new structure** must be inhabited by people associated with those occupying the main dwelling. It cannot be sold or rented out as a standalone property.
- **Plan your required amenities** for the new space early on, to ensure the design incorporates all of the necessities for creating the space you want.
- **You won't need** separate access for an annexe.
- **Ensure that some kind of link** remains between your main home and the new structure.
- **There may be locally specific** sensitivity to consider, so speak to your local authority about what is likely to be permissible. Think about how the building will look and feel within its context.

JULIA RIDDLE

Julia Riddle is a planning consultant with experience in advising on a range of commercial and residential development. She runs Castle Planning (www.castleplanning.uk) and has written guidance to inform the national approach to Custom and Self Build and is a member of the Right to Build Task Force.

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SLIDING DOOR COST GUIDE

A good set of sliders represents a sizeable chunk of your project budget, so you'll want value for money. Here's what you should expect to pay and the key factors that influence final costs

Above: To maximise the opening, this four-panel set of IDSystems' theEDGE2.0 doors features three sliding units that glide behind a fixed panel – perfectly framing countryside views from this rural Norfolk home. Measuring a total of 5,985mm (W) x 2,353mm (H) and finished in RAL 7016 anthracite grey matt, with stainless steel handles, a similar slider would cost around £11,750 + VAT (including installation)

When it comes to aspirational features, glazed doors are right up there on the dream home wish list – whether you're planning a self build, home renovation or extension. Sliding versions offer the opportunity to maximise views and daylight, with slim profiles and minimal framing compared to alternatives like bifolds. But what should you budget for a quality installation?

Like most things in life, you can't expect to get a mid-range or high-end door system at a bargain price. You get what you pay for, so if the price seems low, it's important to ask why. Could this be an indication that the construction, energy performance and/or running mechanisms aren't quite up to scratch?

The best way to gain confidence that you're buying a sliding door you can rely on is to visit showrooms and past projects to scrutinise them in person. Tell-tale signs of a good quality sliding door system include robust running gear (steel is more hardwearing than nylon, so generally better for larger panels); neat frame joints; reliable seals and gaskets etc. If you like what you see, then always ask for certificates backing up the performance claims (weathertightness, security etc), and read the small print on warranties to understand how comprehensive they are on aspects such as finishes and running gear.

KEY FACTORS

Frame material

Sliding doors are much bigger and heavier than standard windows, plus they need to cope with significantly larger spans. So, it stands to reason that they need to be strong and rigid. Hence why most high-end glazed door systems use frames in either aluminium or composite (typically a timber or plastic core, with aluminium externally). These products can offer excellent strength in a relatively slim frame profile, which maximises the viewing pane.

Plastic and timber-only sliders tend to sit at the cheaper end of the market, but do bear in mind they won't be as stable. So, they can't deliver the coveted spans and sightliness of aluminium and composite products.

Size & configuration

It's not rocket science that the biggest single influence on sliding door prices is size. Clearly, a 12m run is always going to cost significantly more than a modest 3m install. As standard, sliding door panels are around 2.1-2.2m tall; if you want an oversized design to add more wow factor, you should expect to pay a premium.

More nuanced is the number and configuration of door panels, which will impact on price, sightlines, how much of the aperture can be opened and more. For instance, a two-panel system will enable you to open up to 50% of the aperture, with just a single intermediate frame. A three-door slider will achieve a 66% clear span, but with more framing interrupting the views. Plus, as a rule, bigger glass panes are more expensive than more framework.

And that's before you get into decisions about how many of the panels should slide. A two-door system with one sliding and one fixed panel only needs a single track, for instance; whereas if both panels are to move, you'll need a twin track and more mechanism, adding cost.

MARTIN GARDNER PHOTOGRAPHER

This project features a 9,745mm (W) x 2,930mm (H) three-panel door system from Minima Sliding, with ultra-slim 20mm sightlines and a flush threshold. It's on a triple track, so each of the 3,200mm (W) x 2,799mm (H) panels can slide. The double-glazed setup achieves a U-value of 1.1 W/m^{2}K and features an electric locking system. A similar install would cost around £32,000 + VAT

Performance

Energy efficiency is a significant consideration for most self builders and renovators. As a general rule, quality double-glazed systems can reach U-values (a measure of thermal performance, where lower numbers are better) of around 1.1 to 1.3 W/m^{2}K. Triple-glazed versions might get down to 0.7 to 0.8 W/m^{2}K. But your choice will be more nuanced than this: depending on your project goals, there's likely to be a sweet spot where U-values, sightlines and price converge, for instance.

You should also investigate other aspects of the door's design and construction. If you're looking to achieve a Passivhaus, for example, there's little point picking a system with great U-values but poor airtightness and weathertightness ratings.

Design & construction

The total cost of your door system doesn't only come down to the product you choose; the architectural design and how it's integrated into the building have a major impact, too. For instance, wide spans of glazing will require more structural support, typically in the form of a chunkier steel I-beam. Open corners, glazed gables and other details can all have an impact, too. A level, step-free threshold between indoors and out is another common choice, the exact cost of which will need to be priced up according to the structural drawings.

SPECIFICATION CHOICES

1 Double vs triple glazing

Quality double glazing offers very good performance, comfortably matching or surpassing Building Regs. But if you want to go that step further, the cost uplift between double and triple glazing might be smaller than you think. A lot depends on the door system in question. Some are designed to easily accommodate the extra thickness of triple glazing. Others, such as doors that feature a bonded construction, involve changing to a different frame profile (meaning a greater price increase). A triple glazed door is also significantly heavier, which may require changes to the wheel mechanisms and other elements.

Typical cost to upgrade to triple glazing: £100-£115 per m^2

2 Safety glass

In new build homes, Building Regulations mandate that accessible glazed doors should always feature laminated glass in at least one of the panes that makes up a double or triple-glazed unit. The rules are a bit more relaxed for extensions and renovations, although toughened glass must be used as a minimum. Laminated panes stay intact when shattered, improving safety and denying access to burglars – so some people do choose to upgrade even if it's not a strict requirement for their project.

Typical cost to upgrade to laminated glass: £20-£25 per panel

3 Solar control glass

Since Part O of the Building Regulations came into play, industry and homeowners alike are becoming more attuned to overheating risks. If you have large areas of south-facing glazing, with little or no solar shading from roof overhangs, trees etc, then it may make sense to invest in solar control glass. This works to reduce incoming heat gain (the g-value) and thus minimise the potential for overheating.

Typical cost to upgrade to solar control glass: Expect an uplift of about 5%-6%

4 Dual colours & special colours

Most good quality sliding doors are available in a huge range of RAL colours as standard, with little or no price difference. There will often be an extra cost if you want something unusual or a dual-colour (one finish inside, another outside) – but this does depend on the product and supplier. For instance, an alu-clad timber slider uses

Below: This project features Internorm's HS330 triple-glazed lift and slide door system, achieving U-values of just 0.73 W/m^{2}K, as part of a glazed courtyard by ecoHaus Windows & Doors. The striking scheme features 22.5m of continuous bespoke glazing with glass-to-glass corner joints. Budget from around £700 per m^2 for a similar install

CHARLES HOSEA

EXAMPLE SLIDING DOOR SYSTEM COSTS

These are indicative costs for various sizes of sliding door system. We've added more systems to our comparison table for 2025 to give you a broader overview of what you might expect to pay. Interestingly, the average cost of a sliding door system has nudged down very slightly in 2025 versus 2024 (down 2.75% across all direct comparison points). We've not attempted to compare the exact specifications of each door in this table, as it would be too much information. So, be aware that you should always seek project-specific quotes, and prices will depend on factors such as thermal performance, glazing spec, locking mechanisms, threshold type etc. Nevertheless, the information below should give you a good yardstick for planning your budget.

SYSTEM	SUPPLIER	SIZE (W X H)	CONFIGURATION	SUPPLY PRICE (DOUBLE GLAZED)	SUPPLY PRICE (TRIPLE GLAZED)
Visiline (aluminium bonded)	**Ecohaus**	3,500mm x 2,200mm	**2** panel double track	**£3,300** + VAT	**£5,800** + VAT
Kustomslide Mono (aluminium)	**Kloeber**	4,000mm x 2,200mm	**2** panel (1 sliding,1 fixed)	**£5,425** + VAT	**£6,395** + VAT
theEDGE2.0 (aluminium part-bonded)	**IDSystems**	4,000mm x 2,200mm	**3 or 4** panel	**£8,115** + VAT *	**n/a**
theEDGE2.0 (aluminium part-bonded)	**IDSystems**	4,000mm x 2,200mm	**2** panel	**£8,650** + VAT *	**n/a**
SF60 (aluminium)	**Sunflex**	4,000mm x 2,200mm	**3** or **4** panel	**£12,450** + VAT *	**£13,425** + VAT *
SF60 (aluminium)	**Sunflex**	4,000mm x 2,200mm	**2** panel	**£14,125** + VAT *	**£14,965** + VAT *
Visiline (aluminium bonded)	**Ecohaus**	5,500mm x 2,200mm	**3** panel triple track	**£5,900** + VAT	**£10,200** + VAT
theEDGE2.0 (aluminium part-bonded)	**IDSystems**	6,000mm x 2,200mm	**3** or **4** panel	**£11,025** + VAT *	**n/a**
theEDGE2.0 (aluminium part-bonded)	**IDSystems**	6,000mm x 2,200mm	**2** panel	**£13,250** + VAT *	**n/a**
SF60 (aluminium)	**Sunflex**	6,000mm x 2,200mm	**3** panel	**£16,325** + VAT *	**£17,850** + VAT *
SF60 (aluminium)	**Sunflex**	6,000mm x 2,200mm	**2** panel	**£17,150** + VAT *	**£18,645** + VAT *
KustomSlide Mono (aluminium)	**Kloeber**	8,000mm x 2,200mm	**4** panel (2 sliding, 2 fixed)	**£12,135** + VAT	**£13,935** + VAT

***includes fitting**

CHRIS TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Above: This extension features a large three-panel set of IDSystems' theEDGE2.0 sliding doors, which measure a total of 6,618mm (W) x 2,698mm (H) and are finished in RAL 7021 black grey matt, with colour-matched handles. A similar setup would cost around £15,200 + VAT including installation

two different materials, so it needs two different finishes anyway (regardless of colourway). **Typical cost to upgrade to dual-colour: £100** for standard colours; **£600+** for non-standard. On some systems, the uplift can be around **10%**.

5 External locking

Most sliders are sold with a limited menu of pre-priced ironmongery choices, which may include the option to use the same finish as the doors themselves. One decision that will impact on cost is whether to include key-operated locks and handles on both sides, or to go internal-only. The latter offers improved security, but may not suit if the slider is the only access at the rear of the house. **Typical cost for external locking: £110**

6 Trickle vents

If you're building a new house, you'll probably be installing a mechanical ventilation system to provide fresh air and meet Part F of the Building Regs. In existing houses, however, trickle vents are typically the most practical choice for achieving ventilation standards. Incorporating them requires adjustment to the frame, so it does add to the cost. Note that the slimmest doors have such narrow frames that they often can't accommodate trickle vents – hence why they're more often seen in new build projects. **Typical cost for trickle vents: £200-£600 per door panel, depending on the system**

7 Installation

Many sliding door providers work on a supply-and-install basis, which means fitting is included in the price. The benefit of this is you know a single company is taking care of measuring, manufacturing and installing the system, so there's a clear line of responsibility. If you're using an external fitter (such as your builder) to do the job, be sure they hold appropriate credentials and that manufacturer warranties will still be valid. **Typical installation costs:** As a rough guide, it might take around a day to fit a standard two-panel, 4m-wide sliding door system, at a cost of around **£800-£1,000**. Factors that may affect prices include access, where you are in the country and the size/weight of the panels. Installation costs will go up considerably if lifting machinery is required (especially craneage).

CONTACTS **EcoHaus Windows & Doors** 0800 612 6519 www.ecohausuk.com **IDSystems** 01603 408804 www.idsystems.co.uk **Internorm** 020 8205 9991 uk.internorm.com **Kloeber** 01487 740044 www.kloeber.co.uk **Minima Sliding** 01622 902095 www.minimasliding.co.uk **Sunflex** 01603 424434 www.sunflexuk.co.uk

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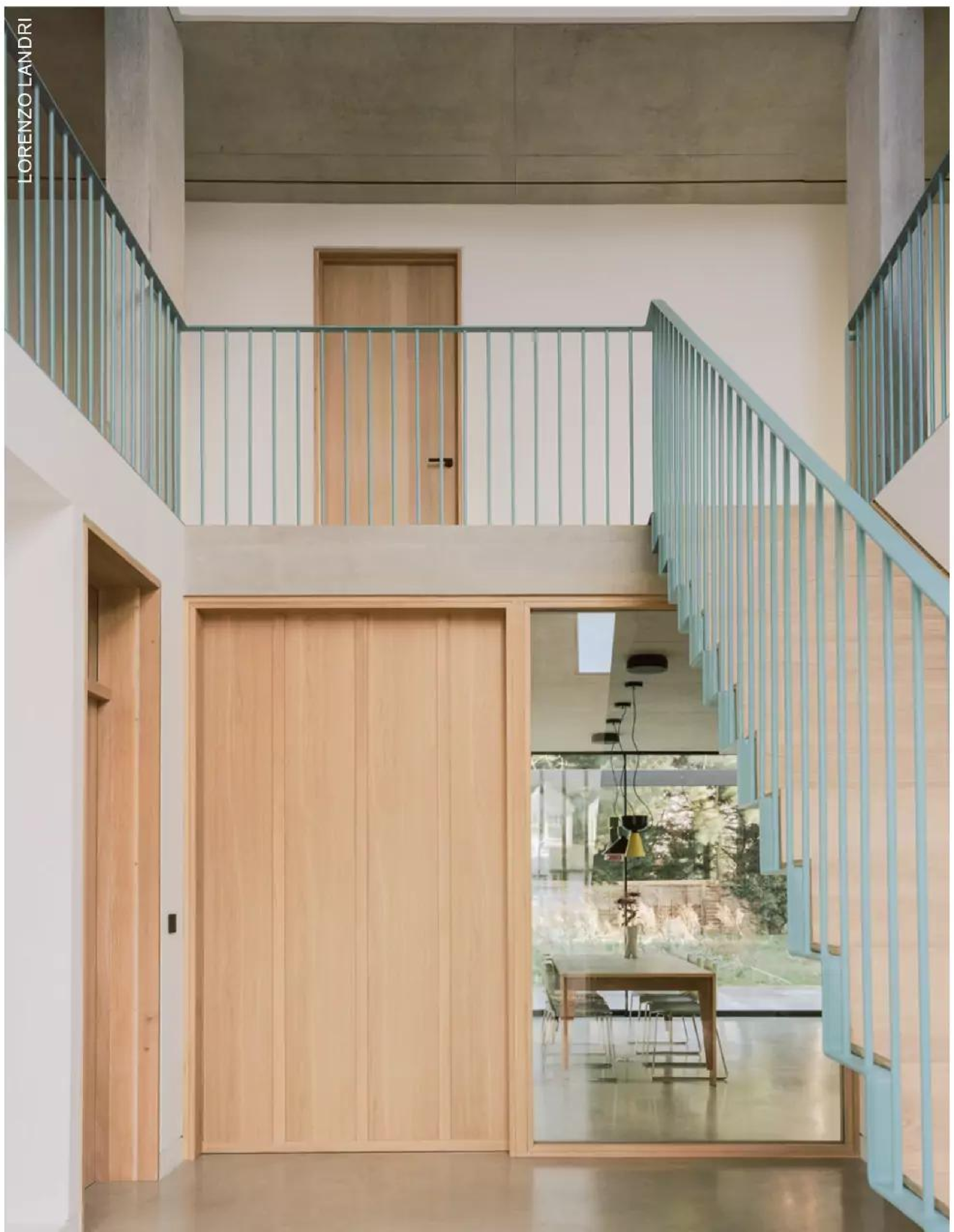
Doors for Home and Industry

Architect **Julian Owen** shares the core considerations for getting this element of your project right

STAIRCASE DESIGN

Your stairs can present a great opportunity to incorporate clever storage solutions or seamlessly integrate other practical necessities you may want to keep hidden – such as this discreet WC designed by DPE Architecture (www.dpearchitecture.co.uk)



LORENZO LANDRI

Right: This statement blue metal staircase delicately wraps around the inner entrance of this home, designed by Fletcher Crane Architects (www.fletchercranearchitects.com), leading to a welcoming first-floor gallery above

The staircase is a special space in any house, offering numerous opportunities to add a touch of drama to your interior design scheme. It can transform the often mundane process of moving between levels into a striking focal point.

Many of the designs found in standard housing estates often treat this element as an afterthought, squashed into the smallest space possible, to maximise the floor area of the rest of the plan. But even with a modest budget, there is an opportunity to create a striking visual impact as soon as you step through the front door, simply by using a bit of imagination and some extra space. Here, I'm exploring how to make the most of your flight and sharing some top tips for designing and specifying the ideal solution.

Key considerations

The location of the staircase is one of the most crucial decisions when working out a floorplan, and it must be considered in three dimensions. This is partly to ensure that the hallway, landing and surrounding rooms link

JERRY SYDER

together efficiently, but also because it is probably the only space in the building where you can play around with changing levels and introducing double height volumes. Most of the rooms of a house tend to be developed using two-dimensional plans, but with a staircase there are always opportunities to introduce interesting design ideas, materials and finishes that are different to the rest of the interior.

If you have the budget, it's a good investment to increase the size of the stairwell from the minimum requirements and create a gallery. Adding extra space that is technically unnecessary is an effective way to give a house a feeling of luxury and openness, regardless of the size of the actual rooms. In a larger home, a gallery might span several metres, creating a spectacular hallway to welcome visitors. In a smaller layout, even a gap of just 300mm or 400mm between the stairs and landing handrails can provide glimpses to the first floor, establishing a visual link between levels. If you are lucky enough to be able to extend the staircase up to a second floor, or a room in the roof, the impression of height and spaciousness is emphasised even further.

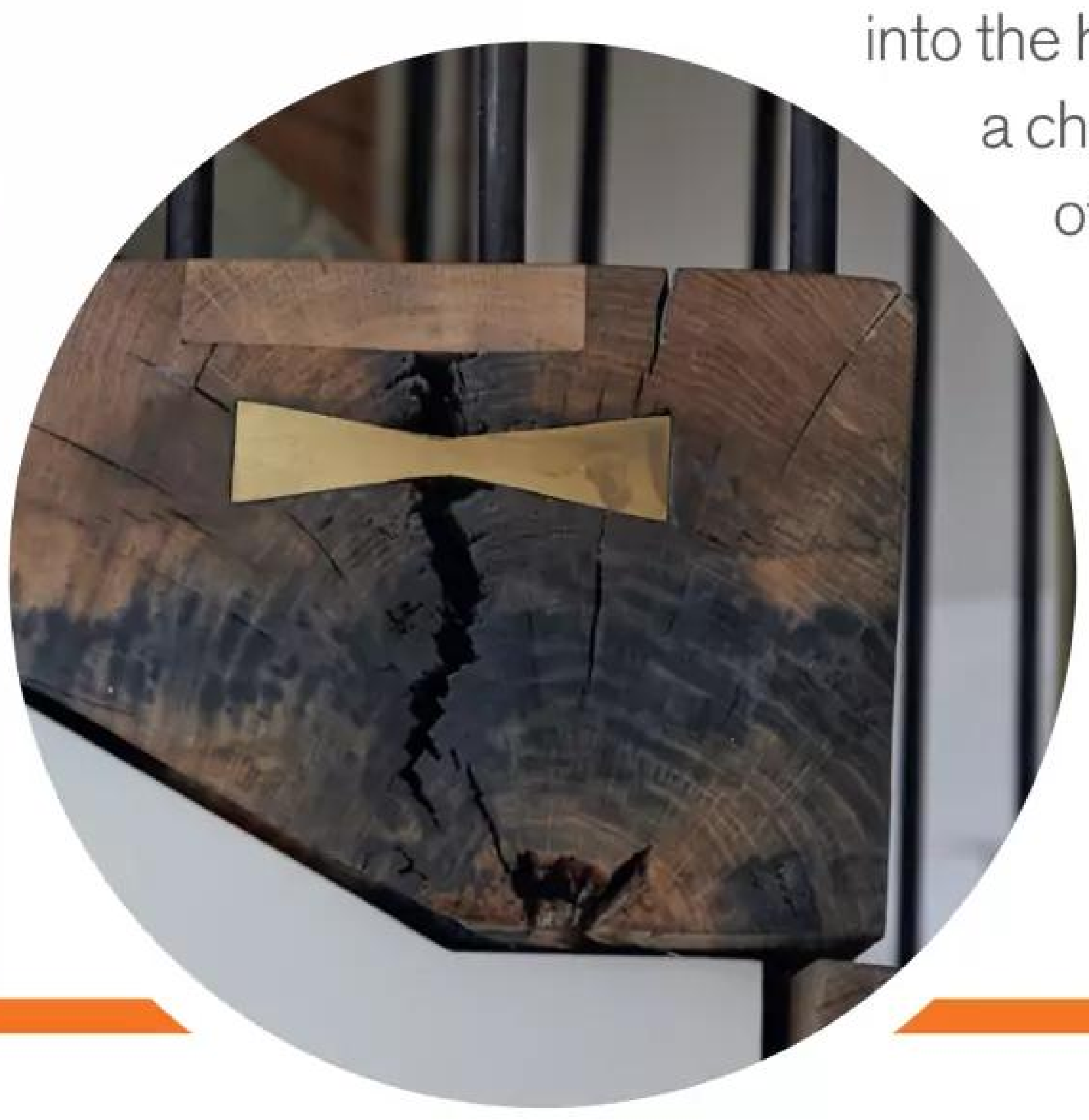
One aspect of staircase design that is often overlooked is how they're used by people who have limited mobility. I've helped many older clients adapt their houses to deal with the restrictions imposed by aging. If you're fortunate enough to be fit and healthy while planning your new home, this may be the last thing on your mind. But it's not unusual for self builders to remain in their house for decades, during which time they or their friends and relatives are likely to face times when getting upstairs becomes a challenge. This is made easier if the treads and risers are more generous than the minimum demanded by the Building Regulations. Using flat half or quarter landings gives the opportunity to rest on the way up and wedge shaped steps (know as winders) on corners should be avoided. The latter are more space efficient, but difficult to manoeuvre if you're a bit unsteady on your feet. If you're really thinking ahead, allow space around the hallway and landing for a lift to be installed down the line, perhaps in the form of built-in cupboards.

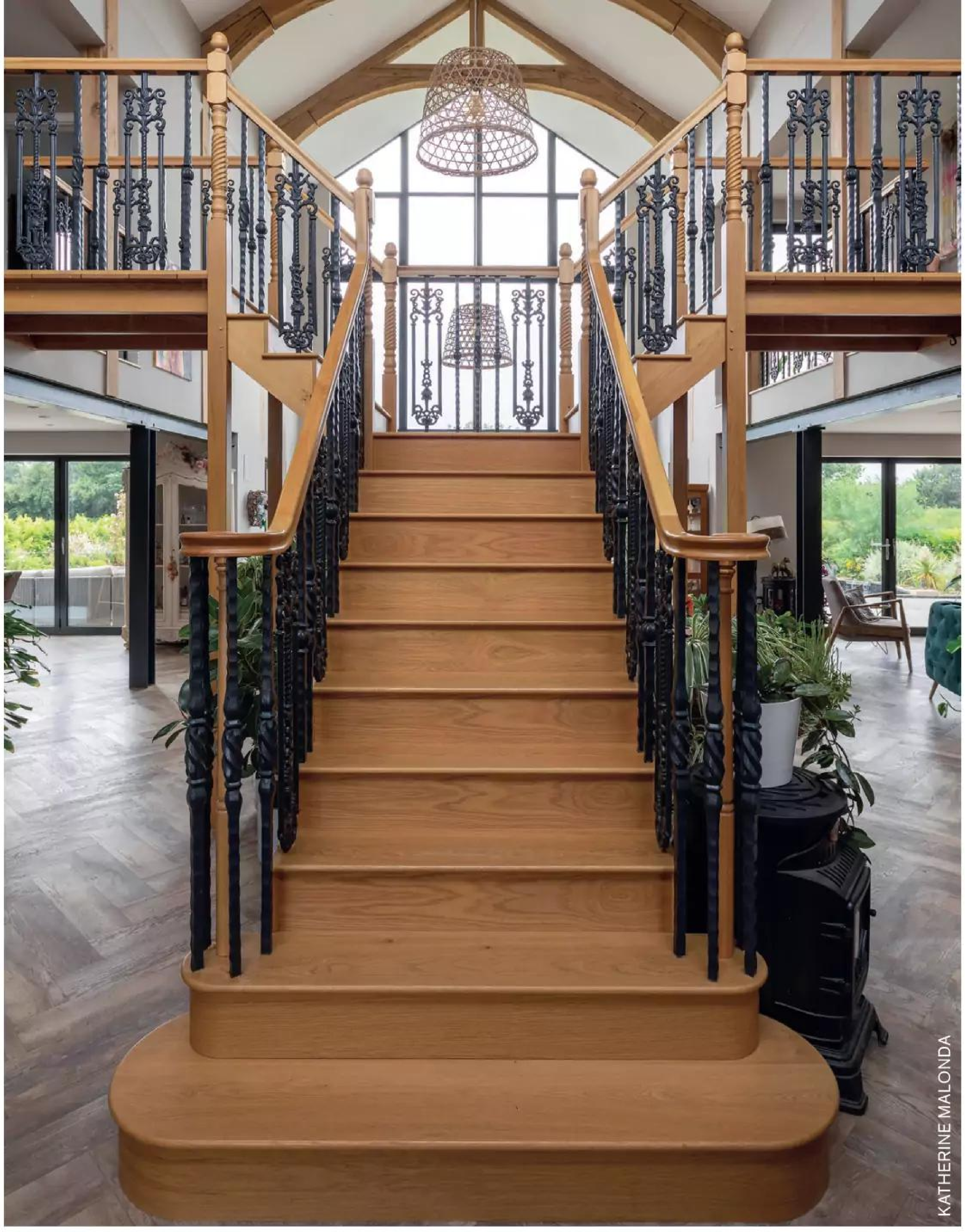
Design opportunities

Some interesting concepts open up when you start to consider the role that glazing can play as part of a staircase design. If the flight runs along an outside wall, the windows in the elevation do not have to match up with the pattern of openings used for the rest of the house, because they can reflect the angle of the steps and change of level. Window shape and scale can be varied, for example by using tall or vertical slits, stepping up to match the incline inside. Circular feature windows are possible because of the large area of wall extending over two floors above the line of steps. A contemporary feel can be created by forming the whole outside wall of the staircase from glass, which is particularly effective if there are some great views out over the garden and beyond. Another particularly effective feature is opening up the ceiling at the top of the stairwell and adding in a rooflight, flooding the space with daylight and offering views of the sky from the hallway below.

Unusual windows have the added benefit of enhancing a flat elevation, but you can also allow the staircase to break out of the plan and project into the garden. This means that it can become a separate design feature in its own right and contrast with the rest of the building. So, if the main walls are brick, the stairwell walls could be clad in timber, zinc, render or glazed, with a contrasting roof form – ideally topped off with rooflights or even a glass lantern.

As well as using daylight to set the mood, don't forget the possibilities offered by artificial lighting. A classic option for a gallery or wider stairwell is to hang a feature pendant light stretching from the first floor ceiling down into the hallway. The traditional fitting here is a chandelier, but there are a wide range of modern variations on this theme that use trailing glass prisms supported by a variety of metals or timber, which are more than just decoration and become works of art. Another suitable location for a spectacular pendant is the full-height space above the lower section of a straight flight of steps,




KATHERINE MALONDA

Above: Build It readers Rick and Julie Anderson created this stunning feature flight in their self build home. The bespoke oak galleried stairs sit in the centre of their entryway, drawing visitors into the room

Inset: This rustic recycled timber staircase was handcrafted by Bisca (www.bisca.co.uk) for a barn conversion project in Northumberland. Bronze butterfly ties are inset within the wood, helping to maintain the treads' structural integrity, while providing an appealing architectural detail

JERRY SYDER

Above: Designed as part of a retrofit project by MAP Architecture (www.map-architecture.co.uk), this bespoke staircase seamlessly connects the three floors of the home. A carefully-placed window and statement pendant lights illuminate the flight beautifully

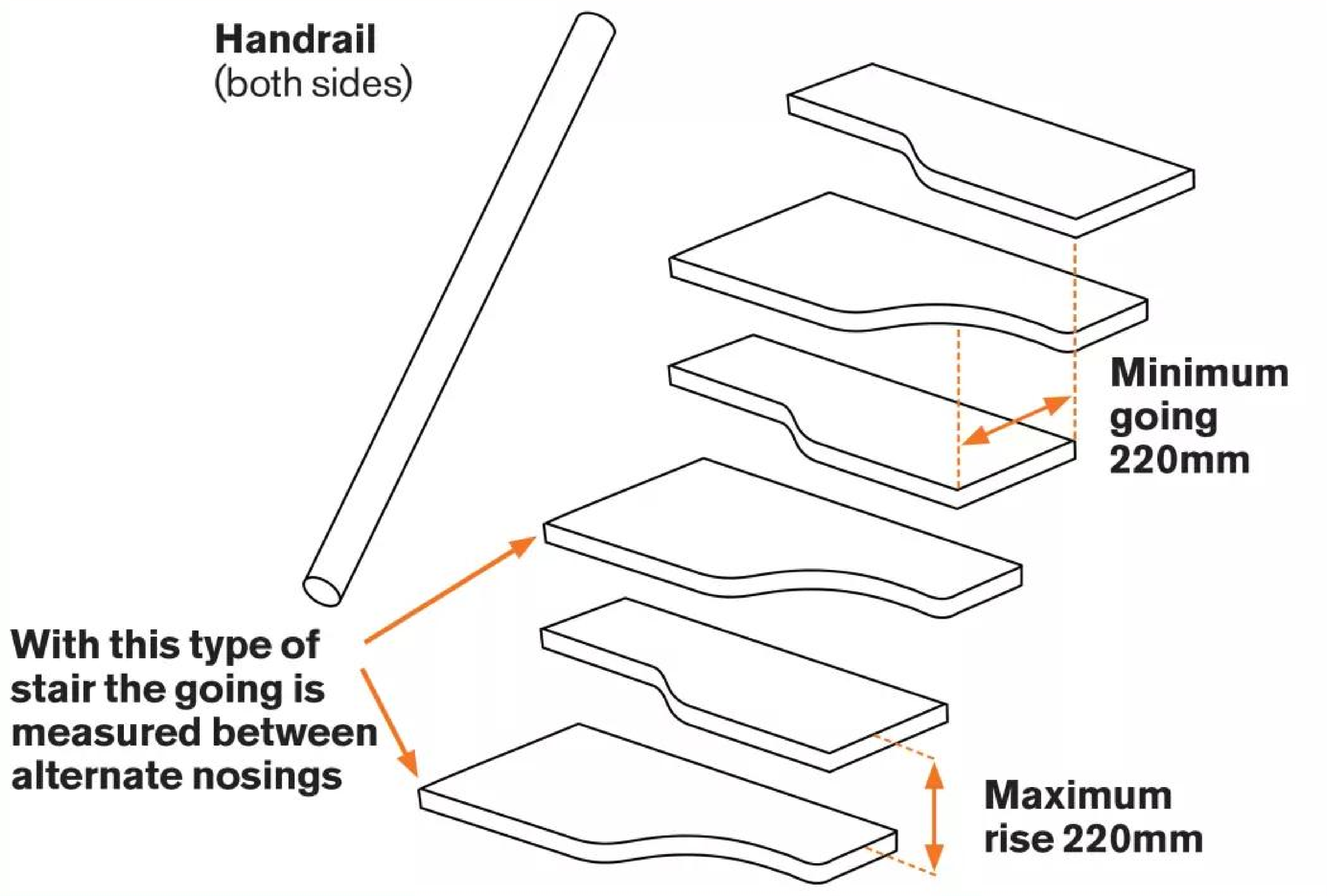
where there is sufficient height for a large lighting feature. Some more low-key yet equally as impactful effects can be created using LED lighting and its variants, which can be run as strips or rows of points of light. They work well at a low level, following the pitch of the steps, discreetly tucked under the overhang of each tread, or concealed underneath the handrail.

All the above ideas can be achieved using simple, relatively cheap building materials. If your budget is tight, traditional handrails, spindles and balustrades are very cost-effective and can be bought off the shelf from joinery companies and builders' merchants. Some manufacturers have online tools where you can enter in the floor-to-floor height and layout, and the staircase is designed for you along with the component parts you need to buy. But if your wallet can stand it, a whole world of possibilities opens up if you commission a bespoke design. For this, you need to approach some specialist designers, who can deliver spectacular talking points for visitors. Schemes that make extensive use of glass are very popular, particularly combined with steel frames and handrails, but even the risers, treads and landings can all be made from structural glazing. Alternatively, expert joiners can create some amazing staircases exploiting the beauty of timber, carving it into unique, sinuous shapes. Top of the range are stone staircases, which because of their design and weight, become a major part of the construction of the house and add a real touch of luxury. Traditional stone flights can be built to appear to float without support on one side by burying one end into the wall and resting the weight of each tread on the one below.

QUICK LOOK BUILDING REGULATIONS

There are some rules governing how staircases are designed, mainly as stipulated in UK Building Regulations. Here's a quick overview of the key points to keep in mind for your new flight:

- **The object of the Regs** is to make sure that the staircase is comfortable and easy to use, as well as reduce the risk of anyone falling off it.
- **The height of each individual step** (know as the riser) is restricted and the width of the part that you step onto (known as the tread) has to comply with guidance on minimum sizes.
- **The overall angle** of the staircase is limited to a maximum of 42°.
- **The height of the handrail** as you ascend the stairs is set at 900mm and 1,000mm for the landing, if this features in your design.
- **For a staircase width of over 1m**, a handrail is required on both sides of the treads, to ensure it's safe to climb.
- **A minimum 2m clear headroom** is needed above the whole width of the steps, unless the flight is being used to access a loft conversion, where you'll find a slight relaxation on this rule.
- **Winders or wedge-shaped steps** that ascend around a corner are allowed under the Regs, but there are minimum size requirements for each tread to avoid people tripping up on them.
- **One regulation is designed to prevent** toddlers from getting their heads stuck in the bannisters. Apparently, this was a common incident before this specific rule was introduced to prevent any gaps between treads or balustrades from being larger than 100mm.
- **There is a relaxation on the sizes and steepness** of the steps if there is very limited space. This design is known as an alternating tread staircase, allowing the steps to be shaped with one half deeper than the other, so they overlap and take up less room (see diagram below).


Handrail
(both sides)
Minimum going 220mm
With this type of stair the going is measured between alternate nosings
Maximum rise 220mm

JULIAN OWEN

Julian Owen is an East Midlands-based chartered architect and author of several books on self build and house alterations. His publications include Self Build, Home Extension Design and Kit and Modern Timber Frame Homes. He's also the founder of the ASBA Architects network. To find out more visit www.asba-architects.org.

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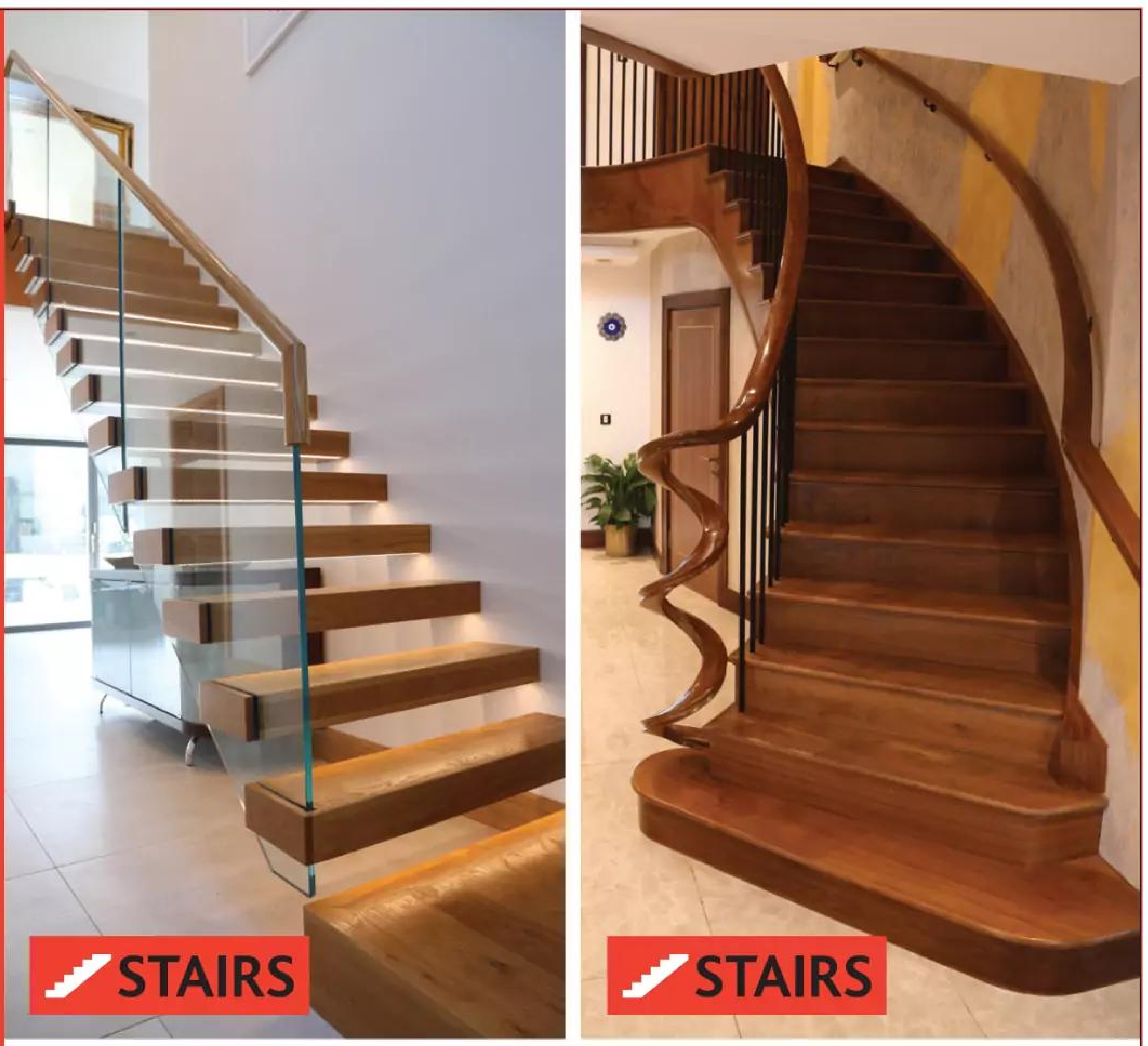
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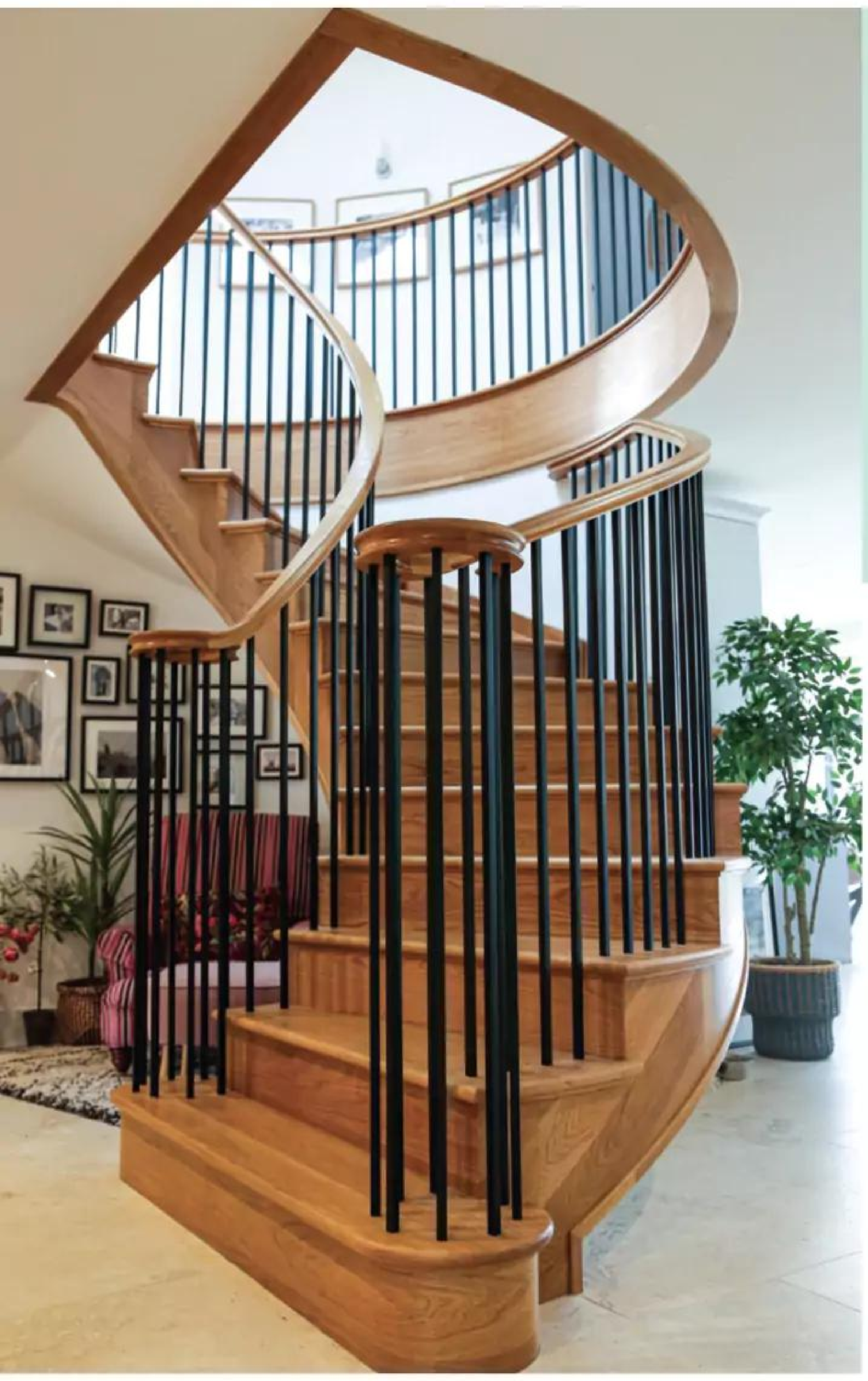
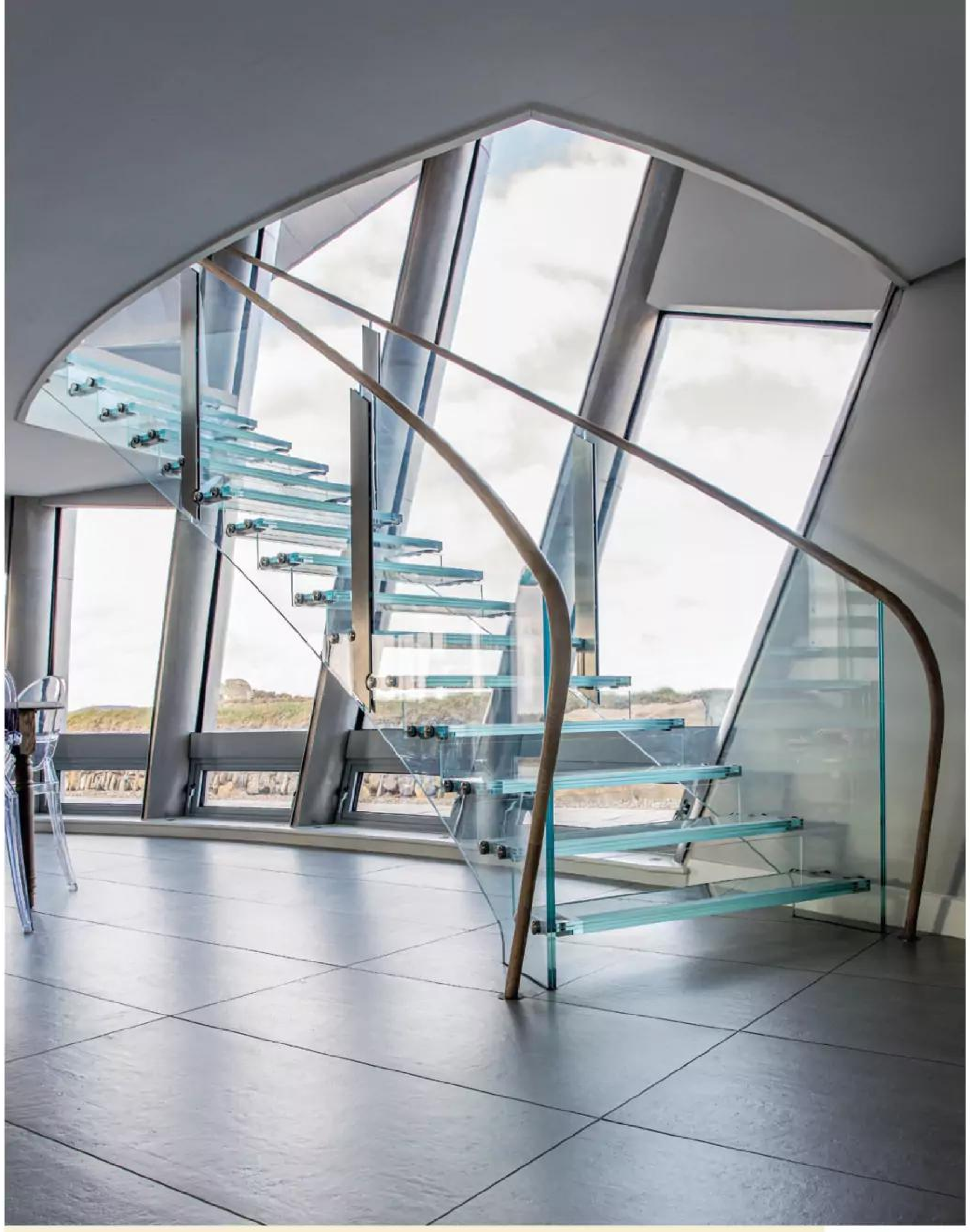
STAIRCASE INSPIRATION

From ultra-modern fully-glazed flights and sleek timber steps to charming oak designs, explore eight shining examples to inspire your new scheme

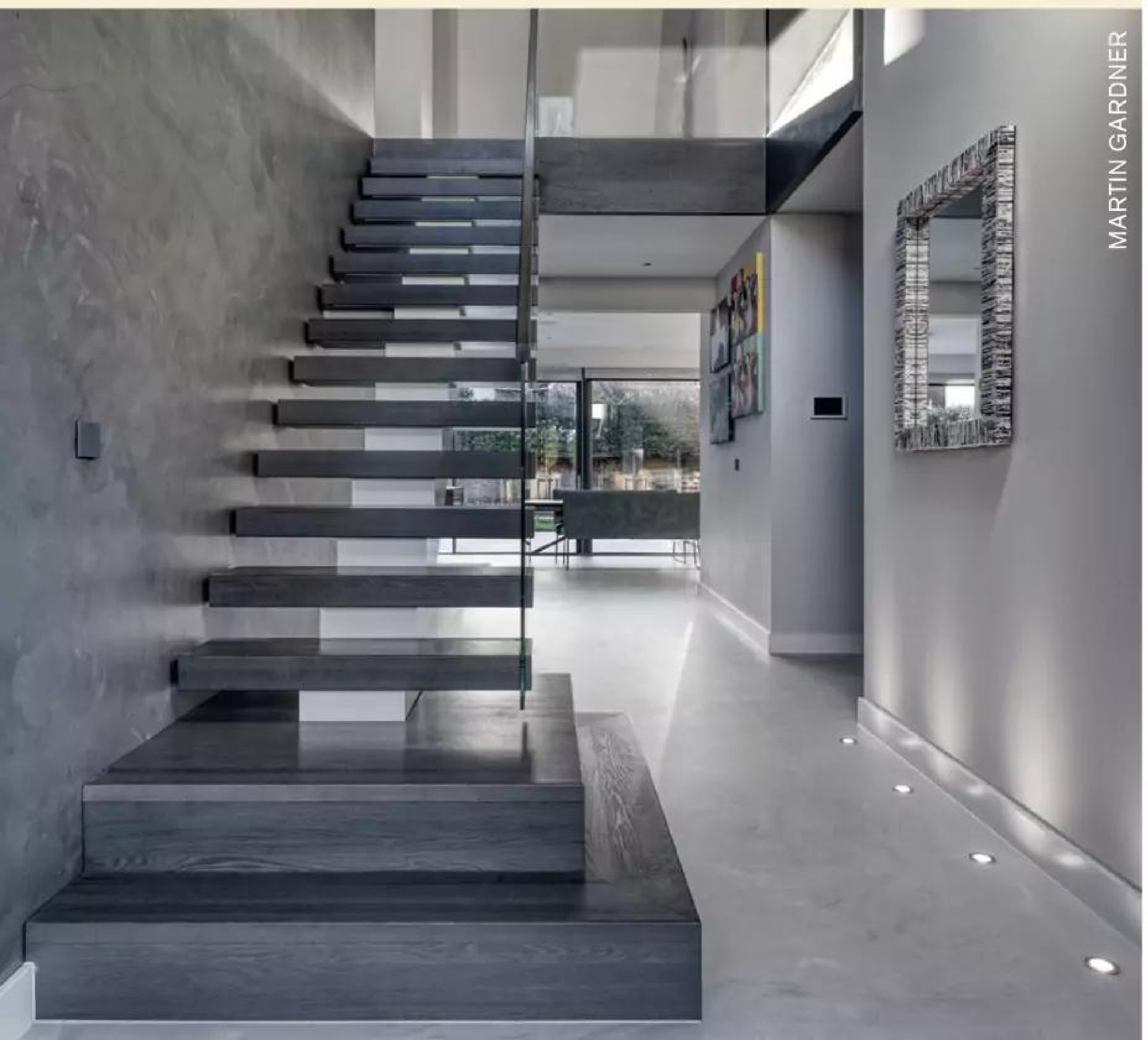


This cut-string staircase from David Smith St Ives features oak treads and continuous, sweeping volute handrails. Combining the charm and character of natural wood with modern design, solid steel spindles complete the flight. **(www.davidsmith.co.uk)**

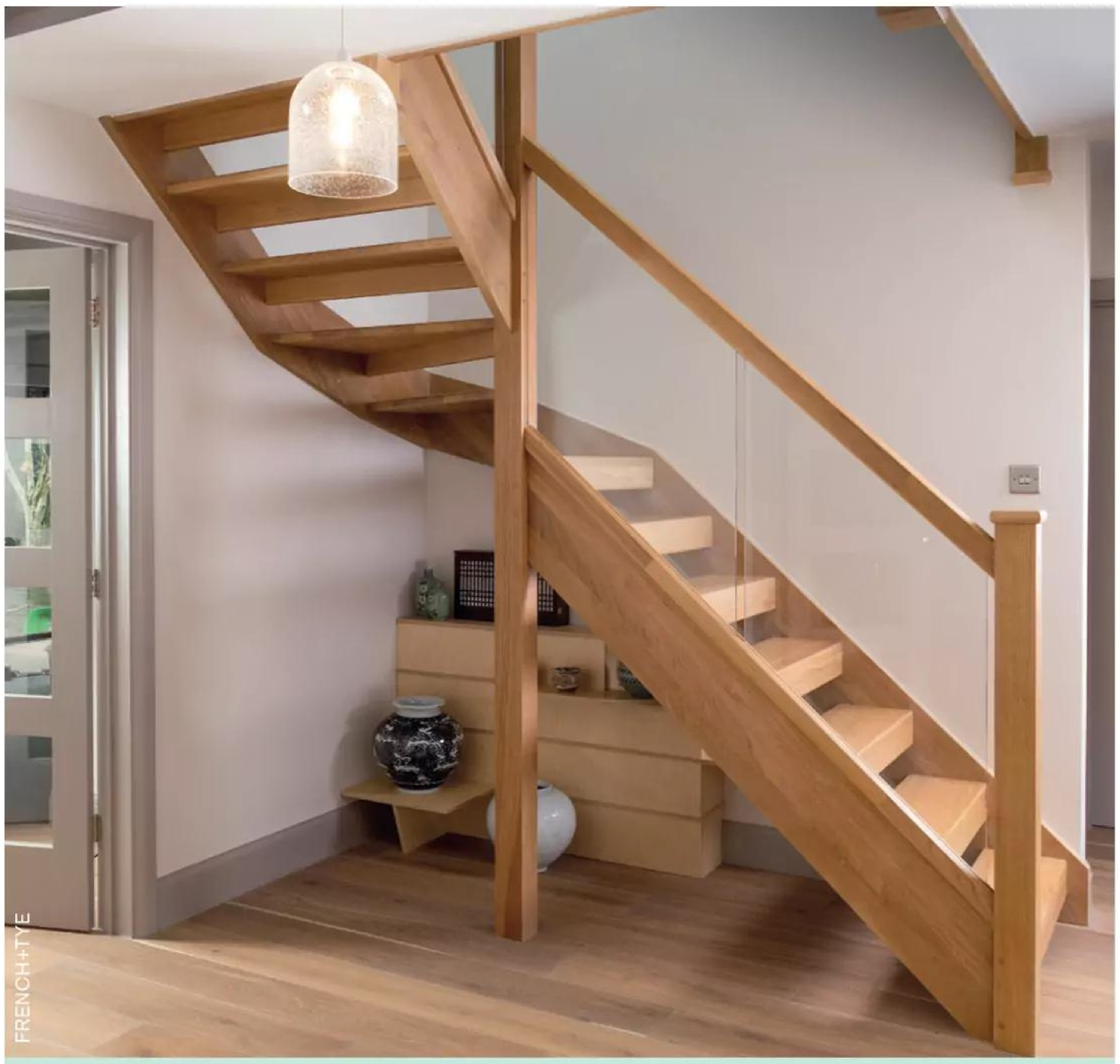


Featuring triple-laminated, low-iron glass treads supported by a curved structural glazed balustrade, this stunning design from Bisca is a sleek, contemporary solution that allows light to flow uninterrupted through the space. Made from 80% glass, only the handrail and minimal fixings are visible, allowing the steps to disappear into the view behind. **(www.bisca.co.uk)**

Adam Knibb Architects designed this floating staircase for a new four-bed family home, to suit the monochromatic interiors. A white painted steel box provides a central spine for the stained oak treads, while invisible glass fixings and a toughened glazed balustrade with oak handrail add to the weightless look. **(www.adamknibbarchitects.com)**

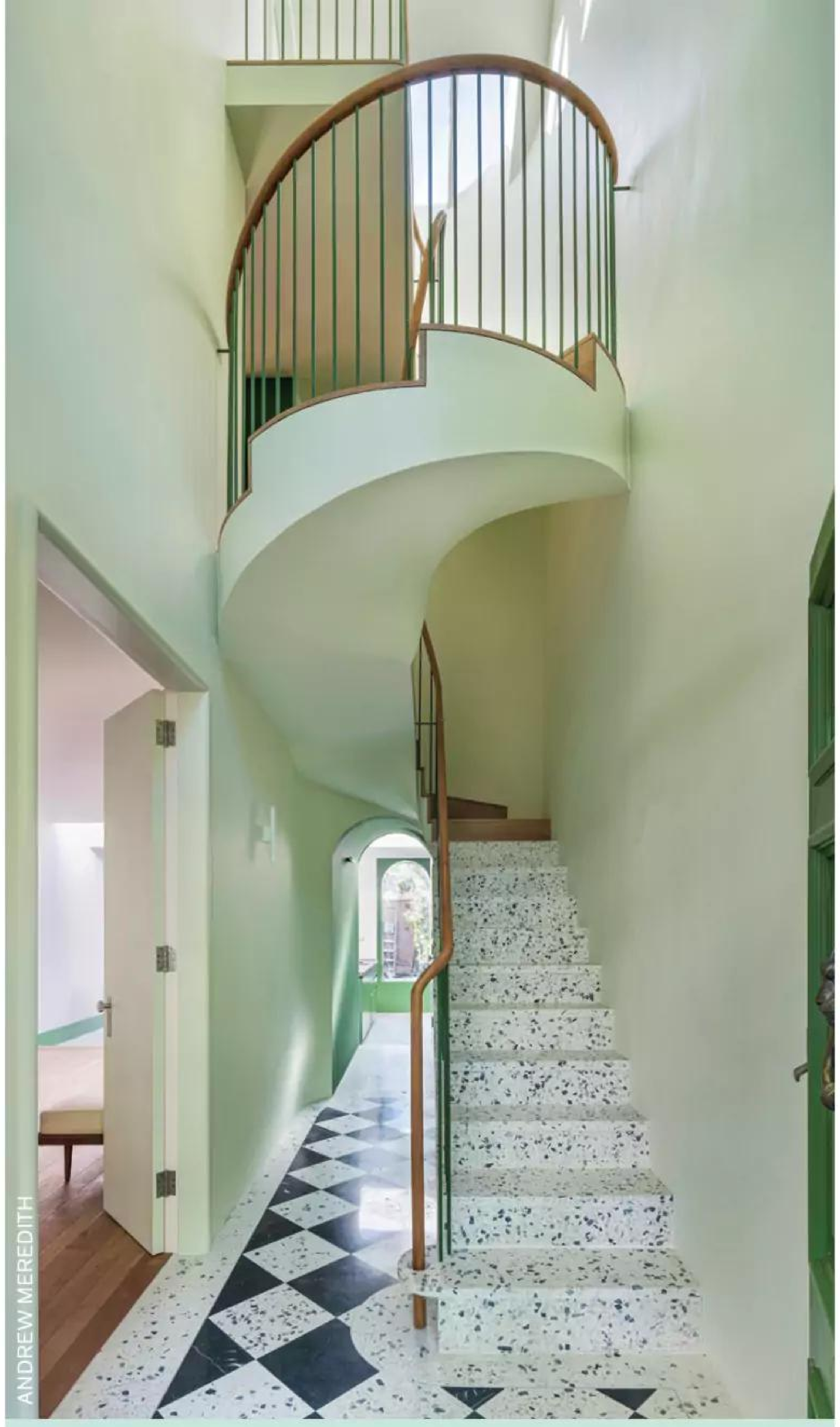


MARTIN GARDNER



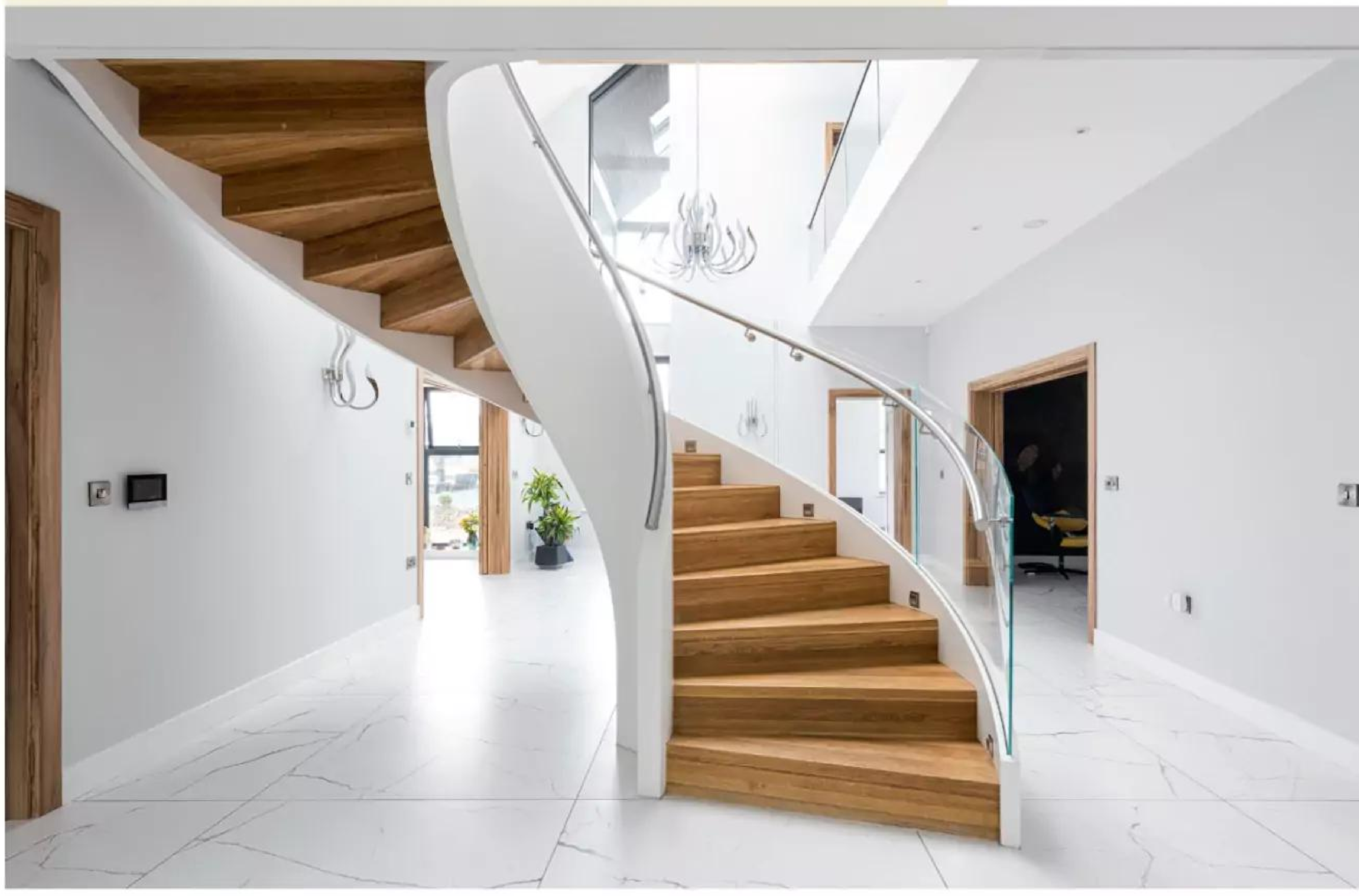
FRENCH+TYE

Slotting in beautifully with the home's pared-back interiors, and bringing much-needed light into the renovated space, this timeless design from StairBox features warm, chunky, solid oak open risers and embedded glazing that allows daylight to circulate the area. **(www.stairbox.com)**

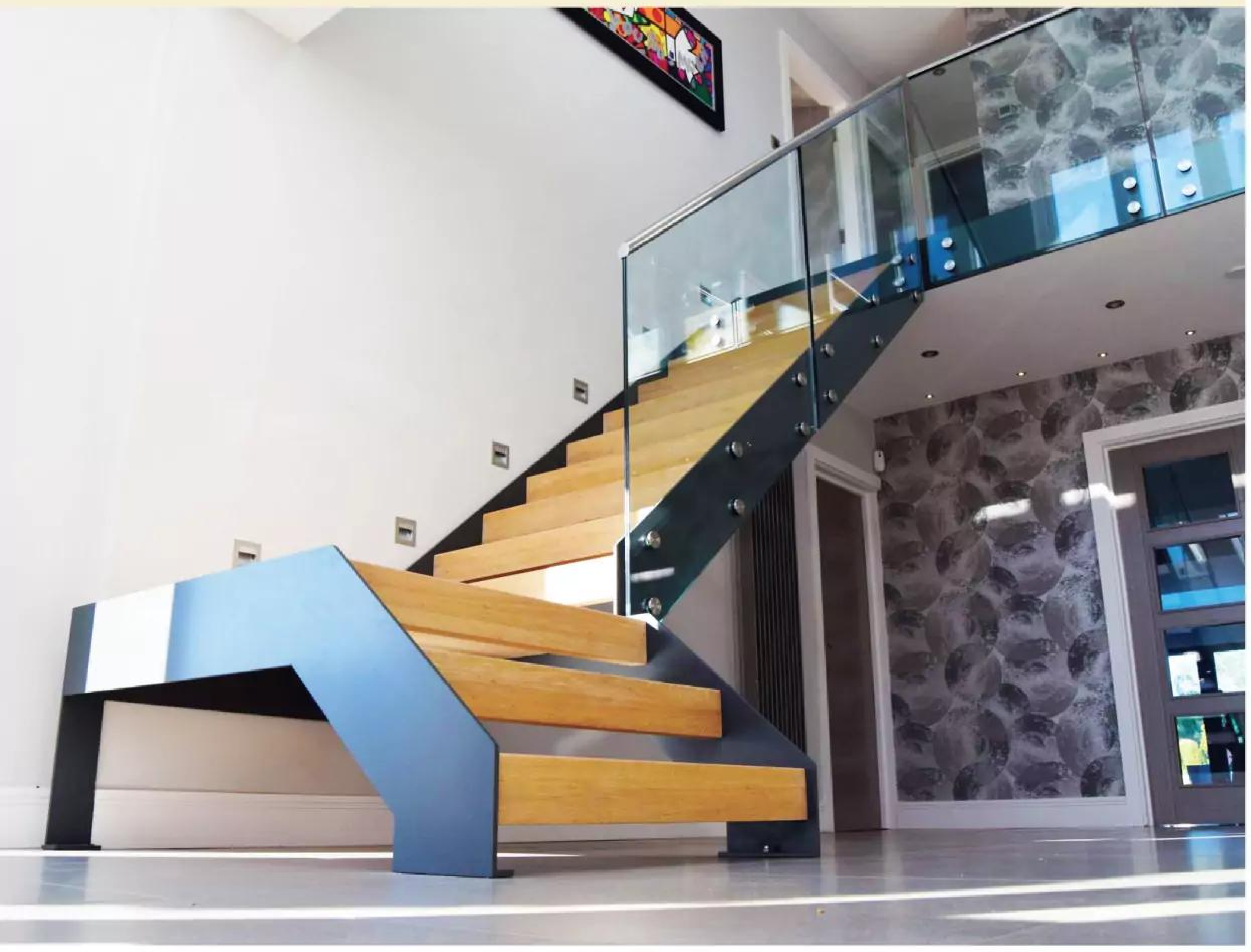


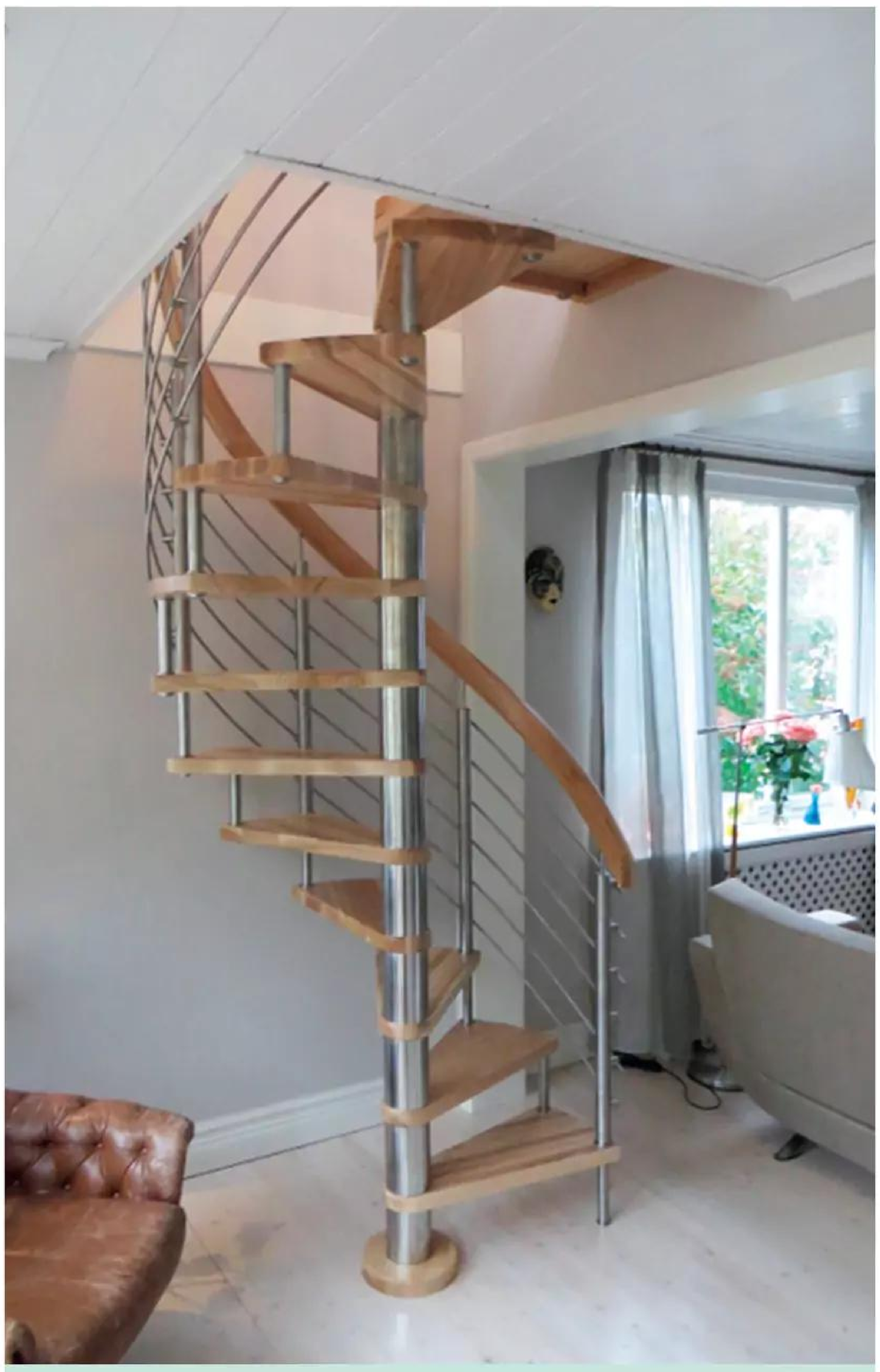
Designed by Gundry + Ducker, this unique cantilevered staircase is the centrepiece of this renovation and extension project. Made from a bespoke mix of terrazzo, using both in-situ and precast formats, the flight connects each floor in the impressive triple height entrance. The funky material can be found on the treads, flooring and worktops, and has even been used to clad the rear extension. **(www.gundryducker.com)**

Combining natural oak, painted components and clear glass, this modern flight by Max-Stairs sets the tone for the rest of the house – elegant but understated. The impressive sculptural design has no visible supports, adding to the sleek and stylish finish. **(www.max-stairs.co.uk)**



The model 500 by Complete Stair Systems is made completely bespoke with steel stringers, 50mm solid timber treads and a choice of complementary balustrade options. This design includes a stylish mix of charming, gold-toned wood steps, plus statement black steel fixings and a glass balustrade. **(www.completestairsystems.co.uk)**





Taking up minimal floor space in this cosy living area, this spiral staircase design by Zakuna has a metal spine with timber treads. It features an industrial-style balustrade constructed from horizontal stainless steel bars and a wooden handrail. The bespoke flight can be customised with a choice of woods, such as oak, ash, walnut or mahogany. **(www.zakuna.co.uk)**

Ask the EXPERTS

Essential advice on your problems with building, budgeting, DIY & planning from the most experienced names in the self build industry

PLANNING
Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets.

FINANCE
Tom McSherry has worked in the financial services industry for 25 years, the last 10 of these at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). He has undertaken two major projects himself and speaks at self build shows throughout the year.

TIMBER FLOORING
Ian Tomlinson is managing director of Chaunceys Timber Flooring (www.chaunceys.co.uk). Chaunceys is based in Bristol and has been supplying sustainable, high-quality wood flooring to homeowners, award-winning architects, design and build companies, and renowned interior designers since 1988.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

PERIOD PROPERTIES
Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, and was most recently to be found renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.

PACKAGE HOMES
James Buchanan is head of custom build at Oakwrights. He works with landowners, clients and property businesses to facilitate, create, develop and deliver unique serviced custom build plots, enabling clients to build their bespoke designed oak frame home.

VAT RECLAIMS
Kathy Tisdale runs Self Build VAT Reclaims (www.selfbuildvatreclaims.com), providing a professional VAT reclaim service which enables self builders and converters to focus on their project.

PLANNING

Can I change my design once work has already started on my project?

I have planning permission to demolish my existing house and detached garage to replace them with a new build home. However, the consent expires in the autumn of 2026. We're not ready to commence the works and think we want to change the design. Can we begin the demolition to ensure the planning approval does not expire and then seek to amend the plans or is it better to submit a new proposal, before the existing one expires?

Planning permissions come with a three-year deadline for starting work. This may sound like plenty of time, but it's common to find yourself with the expiry looming and your plans not yet finalised.

As long as work commences, your permission is secured. However, there are a couple of things to be aware of. Firstly, as the name suggests, you must discharge any pre-commencement conditions attached to the planning permission before you begin. Secondly, the works on site must count as a 'material' start (ie they must be significant enough to count as the beginning of development).

This is where it gets a little complicated. The nightmare scenario is that you think you have started development and secured your consent, but the council disputes whether the work you did was enough to count as properly implementing your permission.

The good news is that demolition is considered a material operation and can therefore count as the start of development. It is important to keep evidence of initiating work in case there is ever a dispute with the planners. If in doubt, you can ask them for confirmation that the works you have undertaken qualify as a commencement by applying for a lawful development certificate.

The alternative, is to make a new planning application, thereby obtaining a fresh permission with a new three-year deadline. Even if you don't think you will ultimately build out the current design, you could resubmit those plans solely to obtain a live consent, which will buy you some time to create a reimagined proposal.

JAMES FRENCH

After approval, it took Eilir Sheryn and Frederieke van Ellen of VESP Architects (www.vesp.uk) two-and-a-half years to start work on their own project, during which time they altered their choice of external materials. They amended their application so they could create the look they wanted

TIMBER FLOORING

Which type of adhesive should I use for my home's wooden floors?

We have an asphalt floor and want to stick some oak floorboards onto it. Which primer and glue would be the most suitable, and is there a difference in the adhesive requirements between solid wood flooring and engineered solutions?

Before installing your oak flooring, it's essential to ensure the asphalt is in good condition. If it's sound and solid with no cracks, you can use an epoxy DPM/primer, followed by a levelling compound to create a flat, stable surface. When using this method, it is important to prepare the area by sand-blinding, which ensures the levelling compound adheres correctly. Any cracks in the asphalt must also be repaired by a specialist before you proceed or, if significantly damaged, the material may need to be professionally removed. Since adhesives do not bond directly to asphalt, a suitable primer will need to be applied first. We would recommend using Mapei Eco Prim Grip+, as it can provide an extremely effective base for adhesion.

Once the primer has fully dried, following the manufacturer's instructions, a levelling compound should be applied. Mapei Latexplan Trade No Ammonia is a reliable option, as it can be used to level differences in thickness between 3mm and 10mm. This product is also suitable for application over most existing adhesive residues, including bitumen.

After the levelling compound has fully cured, the wooden flooring can be bonded using a high-quality adhesive. We recommend Mapei Ultrabond Eco S948, which is very strong and has low VOC emissions. Alternatively, Pallmann P5 or P6 adhesives are also excellent choices, though the specific product and application process should be confirmed directly with Pallmann before you start working on your flooring.

In terms of adhesive requirements, both solid and engineered wood flooring can be installed using the same solution. We typically use Pallmann P5/P6 or Mapei Ultrabond Eco S948, as these adhesives are strong and flexible, allowing for the natural movement of wood. They are also suitable for use with underfloor heating and varying humidity conditions, ensuring durability and stability over time. Additionally, these products are solvent-free and have very low VOC emissions, making them a healthy and environmentally friendly choice for your project.

DAVE PRATT

Timber flooring is a great option for your interiors, as it's a natural, renewable material. This Vintage Grey Tectonic covering from Chaunceys Timber Flooring creates a warm, classic look

FINANCE

What are the types of mortgage available for self builders?

We're at the beginning of the journey to creating our dream home and want to better understand the finance options available. We have some savings and equity, but will need a mortgage to finance much of the plot purchase and works. What options are available to us?

When seeking finance for a self build project (including the plot), you'll want access to the widest possible range of mortgage types to make sure you secure a product that aligns with your needs and payment schedule. There are three main options to choose from, all of which are available from BuildStore Mortgage Services.

Firstly, you could opt for an advanced cost-based mortgage. These were specifically designed to meet the needs of self builders working with offsite-manufactured construction systems, such as timber frame, where payments are required in advance of the superstructure being delivered to site. Unlike other stage payment mortgages that release funds after each stage is completed, this type provides the money upfront, based on projected costs. This will allow you to meet any contractual payments without delays, as the releases can be aligned to your supplier's requirements.

Arrears cost-based mortgages are also available. These suit self builders who want payments released after each stage is completed, based on the actual costs that they've incurred. This option is great for those who already own their site, have additional savings and prefer the assurance of guaranteed stage payments – as opposed to relying on the site's value appreciating. Initial funds can be drawn from the existing value of your site, providing a stable foundation for your project. Funds are then released appropriately as you complete each stage and need to make payments to your manufacturer and trades.

Finally, there's arrears valuation-based mortgages, which provide payments after each stage of the build is completed. Importantly, the amount released is based on the increased value of the property at that stage (assessed by a valuer). This approach is good for those who own their plot and have substantial savings, so they can cover costs if the site value does not rise as expected. This mortgage type, however, is less practical for projects involving an offsite construction solution, as these manufacturers often require upfront payments before on-site construction begins. Since valuation-based arrears lending releases funds only after value increments are verified, it can lead to cash flow issues and delays.

ISTOCK.COM/GRALETTA

CHRIS SNOOK

If you are thinking of knocking down internal walls to create your dream layout, take a look at renovation expert Kate Sandhu's feature on opening up spaces (page 72). This stunning project by Red Squirrel Architects (www.redsquirrelarchitects.co.uk) features an open-plan kitchen and dining area that is bathed in natural light

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Can I demolish a structural internal wall after the project is complete?

I recently completed a double-storey extension. Since moving back in, I've realised the open-plan zone isn't quite large enough for my needs. I'd like to demolish one of the internal load-bearing walls (previously an external wall) to create some extra room. Is it still possible to perform this type of structural alteration now the major work is complete?

The first and most important step is to appoint a structural engineer. They'll look at what you're planning to do and provide a design that shows how the work should be carried out. This typically involves a site investigation and calculations to ensure the structure remains sound, the right size lintel is used and that there aren't any unexpected surprises once the work is complete. They will also provide advice for safe construction going forward.

Once the structural engineer gives you the green light, you'll also need to plan to deal with any existing services, such as pipes and cables, and making good to finishes. Ideally, there won't be anything in the way, but if there is, these elements will need to be altered so the structural work can proceed safely.

When it comes to making good, it's usually straightforward, but there's one thing to keep in mind: floor levels. If you're forming a new opening between rooms, it's not uncommon to discover that the floors in each room are at slightly different heights, which will need to be resolved to the same levels to provide a seamless finish.

PACKAGE HOMES

How do I track down a supplier to help with our self build?

I am tempted by the idea of building a new home with a package supplier, but unsure how to go about finding a reliable company. How early on should I start speaking to providers, and what do I need to be aware of when looking to appoint someone to take my project forward?

There is no one answer for when you should start looking for a supplier, but as soon as possible is ideal. Sometimes clients approach us when they are planning for retirement, when they'll have more time and disposable income for a project. On the other hand, we've had self builders go from never having considered a bespoke home to discovering custom build, buying a plot and moving in within 18 months!

A good starting point is to shortlist longstanding companies that have demonstratable experience and expertise. If you're thinking of using a timber system, consider members of the Structural Timber Association (STA). The organisation's mission is to ensure quality, sustainability, health and safety, skills training and technical knowledge across the structural timber sector. You can also look into members of the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA).

A good supplier should also offer precise contracts that are clear on what is included in your quote. Make sure to read through the fine print carefully so you know what the company is offering in terms of services and materials.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine

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THINK LEVEL OF DETAIL & COURSE LENGTH ARE JUST RIGHT

Most self builders lack experience and hence are likely to make mistakes and stumble into project potholes. Research and knowledge is key. Build It's Self Build Virtual Training will give you the detailed know-how to successfully realise your dream home on time and on budget.

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Stats based on delegate feedback of recent courses

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Courses are all virtual, delivered by Zoom and will allow audience participation and the ability to share experiences. The programme has courses running throughout the year. Places cost £40*.

*A place is based on one device - for one or two people.

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BUILDSTORE
MORTGAGE SERVICES

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

There may be a fee for mortgage advice. The actual amount you pay will depend on your circumstances. The fee is up to 1% but a typical fee £395.

Self build & custom build mortgage table

Looking to fund your bespoke home project? Each month we round up the best deals from leading lenders and update you on what you need to know to secure the right finance

Advance Stage Payment Mortgages

Created by and exclusive to BuildStore, these mortgages provide guaranteed stage payments based on your costs before each phase of the build. This offers certainty in your budget and peace of mind that you can plan for and pay your bills on time.

Arrears Stage Payment Mortgages

These mortages release funds after each stage of building works is completed. To trigger the payments, a valuation must take place that shows an uplift in value. BuildStore's exclusive mortgages can offer increased borrowing of up to 85% of your costs.

Get In Touch

For advice on funding options for your self or custom build project, speak to the experts at BuildStore by calling **0345 223 4647** or visit **www.buildstore.co.uk**

These products are chosen for illustrative purposes, and were available at the time of going to press.

KEY FOR TABLE: ★ BuildStore Exclusive Product | SB Self Build Mortgage | CB Custom Build Mortgage | LTV Loan to Value

Lender		Mortgage Type	Payment Schedule	Contact	LTV Land	LTV End Value	Interest Rate	1st Stage Payment
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.44%	DPP & Building Regs
Loughborough BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.25%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.39%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.24%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.39%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.14%	DPP & Building Regs
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.80%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.25%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.59%	DPP & Building Regs
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.24%	Foundations
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	50%	60%	5.95%	Foundations
Loughborough BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.15%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.19%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.73%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.29%	Foundations
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.95%	Foundations
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.60%	Foundations
Stafford Railway BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.15%	Foundations
Tipton & Coseley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	5.74%	Foundations
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.39%	Foundations
Beverley BS		SB	Arrears	01482 881 510	50%	80%	6.19%	Wall Plate
Penrith BS		SB	Arrears	01768 863 675	80%	80%	5.99%	Foundations
Earl Shilton BS		SB	Arrears	01455 844 422	75%	75%	6.49%	Flexible
Hanley BS		SB	Arrears	01782 255000	80%	80%	6.49%	Foundations
Melton Mowbray BS		SB	Arrears	01664 414 141	n/a	75%	6.00%	Foundations
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	80%	80%	6.24%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	80%	80%	5.95%	Foundations

NaCSBA
National Custom & Self Build Association

THE CAMPAIGN FOR CUSTOM AND SELF BUILD IN THE UK

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Want to build your own home?
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www.nacsba.org.uk

NaCSBA
National Custom & Self Build Association

FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (**www.buildit.co.uk/tools**) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?
Head to **PlotBrowser.com** and register as a seller to list your plot for free.

PlotBrowser from Build It magazine

START YOUR PLOT SEARCH

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at www.PlotBrowser.com

ENGLAND

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield, will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

BERKSHIRE

HUNGERFORD
High Street
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of three, four-bedroom detached dwellings.
Guide price: £695,000
Planning: West Berkshire Council 24/00981/FUL
Contact: Knight Frank LLP 01488 682726 hungerford@knightfrank.co.uk
Plot ID: 136849

TWYFORD
Waingels Road
Single plot with planning permission for a five-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Wokingham Borough Council 191588
Contact: Davis Tate 01189 344433 twyford@davistate.com
Plot ID: 136847

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

BUCKINGHAM
Moreton Road
A plot of land with consent for the construction of a two-storey, three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £390,000
Planning: Aylesbury Vale District Council 20/00510/APP
Contact: Michael Graham 01280 441515 salesb@michaelgraham.co.uk
Plot ID: 136928

CHESHAM
Woodley Hill
Building plot with planning permission in place for a pair of three-bedroom semi-detached houses.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Chiltern District Council pl/20/3905/conda, pl/20/4290/de
Contact: Savills Auctions 020 7824 9091 / 020 7730 0822 auctions@savills.com
Plot ID: 136917

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CAMBRIDGE
Prospect Row
Plot with consent for change of use to residential, with a first-floor extension to create a two-bedroom home.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Cambridge City Council 22/01784/ful
Contact: Cheffins 01223 214214 cambridge.residential@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 136900

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

THORNBOROUGH
Brevitts Farm
Smallholding available in three lots or as one. Lot 1 has Class Q consent for conversion into a single home extending to 292m².
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Buckinghamshire Council 24/03285/couar
Contact: Bidwells 01223 841842 info@bidwells.co.uk
Plot ID: 136937

ELM
Chapel Lane
Plot of land with outline planning permission for the construction of a detached bungalow.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 22/00495/O
Contact: Haart 01945 467555 wisbech@haart.co.uk
Plot ID: 136905

NEWMARKET
The Street
A single building plot with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: East Cambridgeshire District Council 24/01016/FUL
Contact: Pocock & Shaw 01638 668284 newmarket@pocock.co.uk
Plot ID: 136758

NEWTON IN THE ISLE
High Road
Plot of land with planning permission granted for a four-bedroom detached home with a separate double garage.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Fenland District Council F/YR22/1153/F
Contact: Aspire Homes 01945 408007 info@aspire-homes.com
Plot ID: 136797

WISBECH
Lords Lane
Plot with planning consent granted for the demolition of the existing barns and the erection of a pair of four-bedroom detached properties.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Fenland District Council F/YR24/0592/F
Contact: William H Brown 01945 464451 wisbech@williamhbrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 136989

CHESHIRE

CONGLETON
Leek Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a pair of semi-detached, three-bedroom dwelligs.
Guide price: £240,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 24/2657C
Contact: Whittaker & Biggs 01260 273241 congleton@whittakerandbiggs.co.uk
Plot ID: 136839

RAINHILL
Mill Hey
Plot with planning permission for two detached residential dwellings.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council P/2024/0306 OUP
Contact: Ashtons 01942 364446 ashton@ashtons.net
Plot ID: 136853

SOMERFORD
Somerford Hall
Plot of land with consent for a detached two-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £197,500
Planning: Cheshire East Council 23/1063C
Contact: Jackson-Stops & Staff 01625 540340 alderley@jackson-stops.co.uk
Plot ID: 136930

CORNWALL

GERMOE PENZANCE
Helston Road

A single plot with consent for a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/06941
Contact: Christophers Estate Agents 01326 565566 property@christophers.uk.com
Plot ID: 136782

HELSTON
Carnkie
Plot of land with planning permission for the removal of the existing two-bedroom house and its replacement with a dormer bungalow.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/03654
Contact: Kimberley's 01326 311400 info@kimberleys.co.uk
Plot ID: 136774

LISKEARD
The Sheep Shed
A four-acre plot with consent for a four-bedroom detached home of 256m² with far-reaching views.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/07067
Contact: Moorhaven Developments 01752 892411 laura@moorhaven.org
Plot ID: 136820

SCORRIER
Whitehall
Plot of land with planning consent for the conversion and extension of an existing redundant outbuilding to form a single dwelling.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/01877
Contact: Lodge & Thomas Chartered Surveyors 01872 272722 property@lodgeandthomas.co.uk
Plot ID: 136856

TEHIDY
South Drive
A plot of land with planning consent granted for the demolition of the existing cabin and the construction of a one-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/08691
Contact: MAP Estate Agents 01209 243333 sales@mapestateagents.com
Plot ID: 136792

TRURO
Wheal Golden Drive
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of two semi-detached residential dwellings; one comprising two bedrooms and the other comprising one-bedroom.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Cornwall Council Refer to agent
Contact: Savills 020 7535 3300 kensington@savills.co.uk
Plot ID: 136759

DERBYSHIRE

CALOW
Lawn Villas
Plot of land for the construction of a two-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: North East Derbyshire District Council 22/00245/OL
Contact: W T Parkers 01246 232156 chesterfield@wtparker.com
Plot ID: 136807

CHESTERFIELD
Rectory Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a detached three-bedroom property.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: North East Derbyshire District Council CHE/23/00723/OUT

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

GRAPPENHALL
Chester Road
Plot with planning permission for the demolition of the existing garage and erection of an energy-efficient dwelling with associated cart lodge.
Guide price: £425,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 24/00457/FUL
Contact: Cheffins 01799 523656 saffron-walden@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 136931

Contact: Reeds Rains 01246 236991 Chesterfield@reedsrains.co.uk
Plot ID: 136772

DEVON

BIDEFORD
Laurel Avenue
Single building plot with planning permission for the construction of a detached two-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £70,000
Planning: Torridge District Council 1/0369/2023/FUL
Contact: Regency Estate Agents 01237 422433 info@regencyestateagents.com
Plot ID: 136838

BLACKAWTON
North Millcombe Farm
A plot with permission for a detached two-bedroom home with a study.
Guide price: £525,000
Planning: South Hams District Council 1941/24/VAR
Contact: Rendells 01803 863888 totnes@rendells.co.uk
Plot ID: 136889

LYNTON
Station Hill
Bungalow with planning permission for the replacement of the roof with a first floor extension, the removal of the ground floor garden room and the extension of the front entrance.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Exmoor National Park 62/41/23/023
Contact: Stags 01271 322833 barnstaple@stags.co.uk
Plot ID: 136910

DORSET

GILLINGHAM
Bay Lane
Plot of land with planning application pending for the construction of three detached residential dwellings.
Guide price: on application
Planning: North Dorset District Council 2/2019/0739/FUL
Contact: Greenslade Taylor Hunt - Land and Planning 01823 334466 landplanning.taunton@gth.net
Plot ID: 136962

GRIMSTONE
Dorchester Road
A single building plot with planning consent for the erection of a two-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: West Dorset District Council P/FUL/2022/02153
Contact: Parkers 01305 340860 enquiries@parkersproperty.com
Plot ID: 136846

EAST SUSSEX

BEXHILL-ON-SEA
Church Vale Road

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PLOT?

The perfect piece of land would be in a pleasant area, affordable and level, with easy access, good ground conditions and no planning issues or obstructions. The issue, of course, is that plot may not exist. Even the best sites require some compromise, so it's crucial to properly assess contenders to get as close as possible to your goals.

All the plots in our listings come with planning permission: either outline (a loose affirmation the site can be developed) or full (consent for a particular design). Beware of any site without current approval. Land is worth considerably more once consent has been granted, so if the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Once you've spotted an opportunity, consider whether the type of house you want can be comfortably accommodated on the plot, and if the existing consent allows for it or could be amended to suit. If it's a yes to both, then the site is worth a bit more research.

Check for issues on the plot that could increase construction costs, make it difficult to get the right design for your needs, or affect the viability of a project. Some of the most notorious budget-busters include steep slopes, difficult access to services, or obstacles like overhead cables. Most issues are not insurmountable and, with good design, some can even be turned to your advantage.

From a planning perspective, check how long is left on the consent. If it is less than six months and you will need to redesign the house to suit your needs or sort out any planning conditions, this could be problematic.

If early investigations seem positive, then you can move on to a more in-depth appraisal of how suitable the site is. Consider access, ground conditions, drainage and legal matters. If you are unsure, seek professional advice. This might mean speaking to your local council. Our useful online resource **www.self-build.co.uk/plot-checklist** can help bring structure to this part of the assessment process.

EAST SUSSEX

FOREST ROW
Hartfield Road
A single plot of land with outline planning consent granted on appeal for the construction of a four-bedroom dwelling, indicative of a Tudor-style design.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2020/1688/O
Contact: Mansell McTaggart 01342 826682 fr@mansellmctaggart.co.uk
Plot ID: 136955

Plot of land with consent for a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Rother District Council Rr/2024/975/P
Contact: PCM Estate Agents 01424 839111 info@pcmestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136919

HOVE
Nevill Road
Land with permission for a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Brighton and Hove City Council BH2023/01489
Contact: Auction House Sussex 01273 201989 sussex@auctionhouse.co.uk
Plot ID: 136907

MARK CROSS
Tunbridge Wells Road
Plot with consent for the conversion of a former farm into three homes.
Guide price: £685,000
Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2022/1378/F
Contact: Lambert & Foster 01435 873999 sussex@lambertandfoster.co.uk
Plot ID: 136903

EAST YORKSHIRE

HOLME-ON-SPALDING-MOOR
New Road
Plot of land with full planning permission for the conversion of an existing barn into three new properties, as well as outline permission for four further homes.
Guide price: £700,000
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 23/01489/plf
Contact: Hunters 01904 621026 york@hunters.com
Plot ID: 136880

STAMFORD BRIDGE
Church Road
Plot with planning permission for a three-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 23/00118/PLF
Contact: R M English 01904 697900 rme@rmenglish.co.uk
Plot ID: 136936

ESSEX

BRAINTREE
Lyons Hall Road
Plot of land with planning permission to convert the existing water tower into a four-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 22/02126/FUL
Contact: Intercounty 01371 878322 dunmow@intercounty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136768

GOSFIELD
The Street
Plot with consent for a four-bedroom detached home with double garage.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 20/00700/REM
Contact: Michaels Property Consultants 01787 322799 halstead@michaelsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136795

ONGAR
Church Lane
Plot with consent for the demolition of the existing dwellings and the erection of a four-bedroom property.
Guide price: £690,000
Planning: Epping Forest District Council EPF/1028/21
Contact: Beresfords 01245 500555 chelmsford.sales@beresfordsgroup.co.uk
Plot ID: 136762

SOUTH WEALD
Weald Road
Plot of land with planning permission granted for the construction of two semi-detached dwellings and a single detached property.
Guide price: £1,250,000
Planning: Brentwood Borough Council 21/02068/S192, 21/02069/S192, 21/02070/S192
Contact: Keith Ashton Estates 01277 375757 village@keithashtons.co.uk
Plot ID: 136954

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

CHARFIELD
Wotton Road
Single bulding plot with consent for the construction of a three-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: South Gloucestershire Council P24/01499/F
Contact: David James 01453 843720 wotton@djpnr.co.uk
Plot ID: 136991

HANGBERRY
Squires Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the demolition of the existing building and construction of a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P0707/22/FUL
Contact: Dean Estate Agents 01594 835751 coleford@deanestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136855

HARTPURY
Gloucester Road
Plot with planning permission in place for three detached houses.
Guide price: £700,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P0150/23/ful
Contact: Richard Butler 01989 567979 sales@richard-butler.co.uk
Plot ID: 136999

NAILSWORTH
Bunting Hill
Plot with consent for a three-bedroom home and a two-bedroom home.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Stroud District Council S.23/0358/ful
Contact: Peter Joy Estate Agents 01453 766333 stroud@peterjoy.co.uk
Plot ID: 136904

SIDDINGTON
The Common
Plot of land with permission for a single detached residential dwelling.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Cotswold District Council 19/00051/FUL
Contact: Strutt & Parker 01285 653101 cirencester@struttandparker.com
Plot ID: 136827

GREATER LONDON

WOOD GREEN
Westbury Avenue
Plot with consent for a single-storey, two-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £180,000
Planning: London Borough of Haringey Pp-12172670
Contact: Auction House London 020 7625 9007 info@auctionhouselondon.co.uk
Plot ID: 136756

HAMPSHIRE

BOURNEMOUTH
Cranmer Road
Plot with planning permission for a detached two-bedroom house.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Bournemouth Borough Council 7-2024-20584-E
Contact: Jordan Marks Estates 01202 979861 admin@jordanmarksestates.co.uk
Plot ID: 136781

HYTHE
Fawley Road
Plot of land with planning permission for a pair of semi-detached dwellings.
Guide price: £160,000
Planning: New Forest District Council 22/11251
Contact: Fox & Sons 023 8086 2243 totton@sequencehome.co.uk
Plot ID: 136790

HERTFORDSHIRE

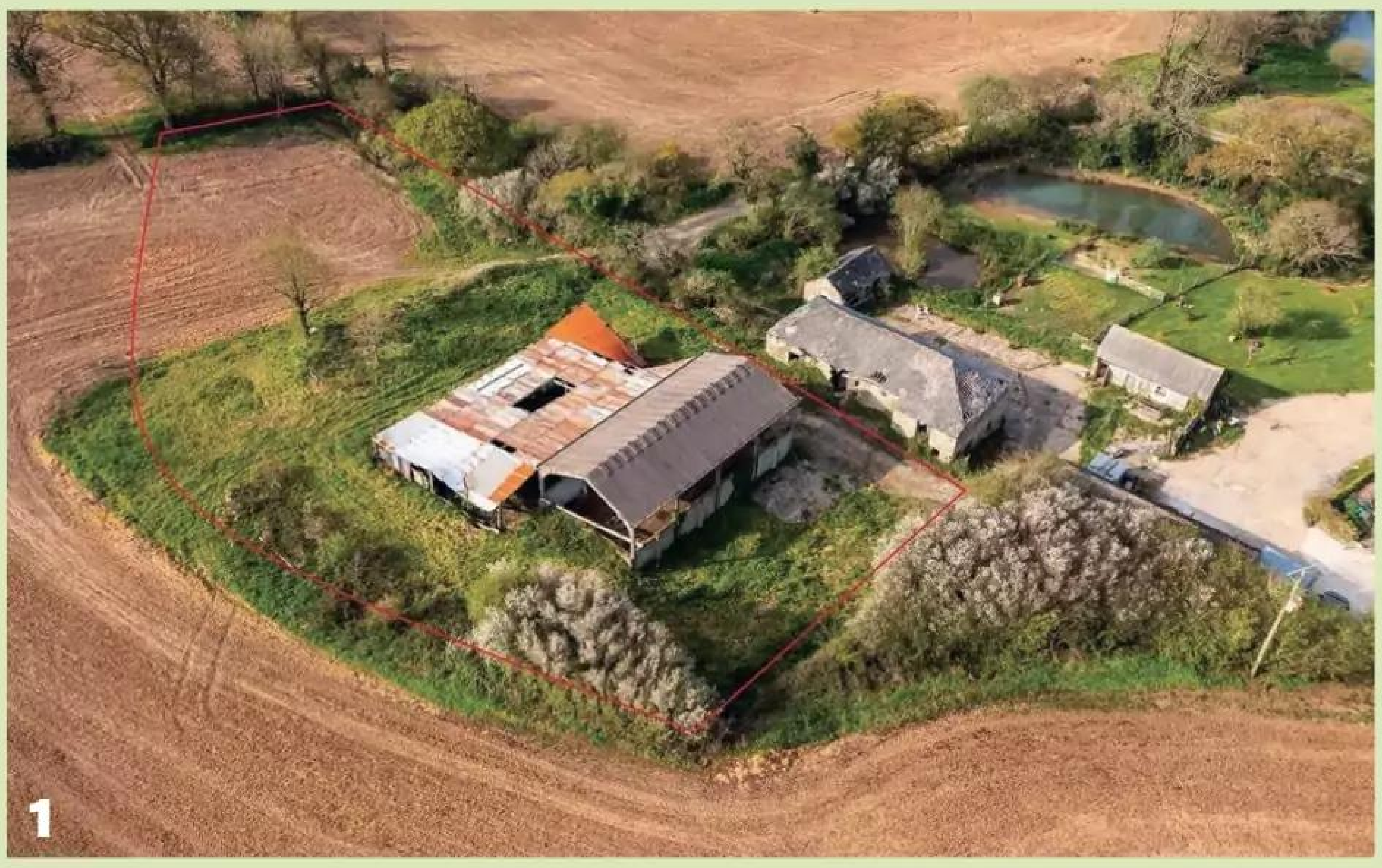
ASHWELL
Station Road
Plot with consent for the erection of a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £385,000
Planning: North Hertfordshire District Council 23/02560/FP
Contact: Satchells 01462 892041 Baldock@satchells.co.uk
Plot ID: 136890

LONG MARSTON, TRING
Land Adj. Langdale Cottages
A 0.4-acre plot with full planning permission for a single-storey barn-style dwelling of 260m^2.
Guide price: £650,000
Planning: Dacorum Council 23/02341/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07484 136866 stevefrancis_uk@yahoo.co.uk
Plot ID: 136923

KENT

BRASTED, WESTERHAM
Brasted Hill Road
A 0.5-acre plot with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached house of around 297m^2 with a detached double garage.
Guide price: £600,000

CONVERSION OF KESTLE FARM



LOCATION Ladock, Cornwall

GUIDE PRICE £325,000

AREA 171m²

PLANNING Cornwall Council PA22/07594

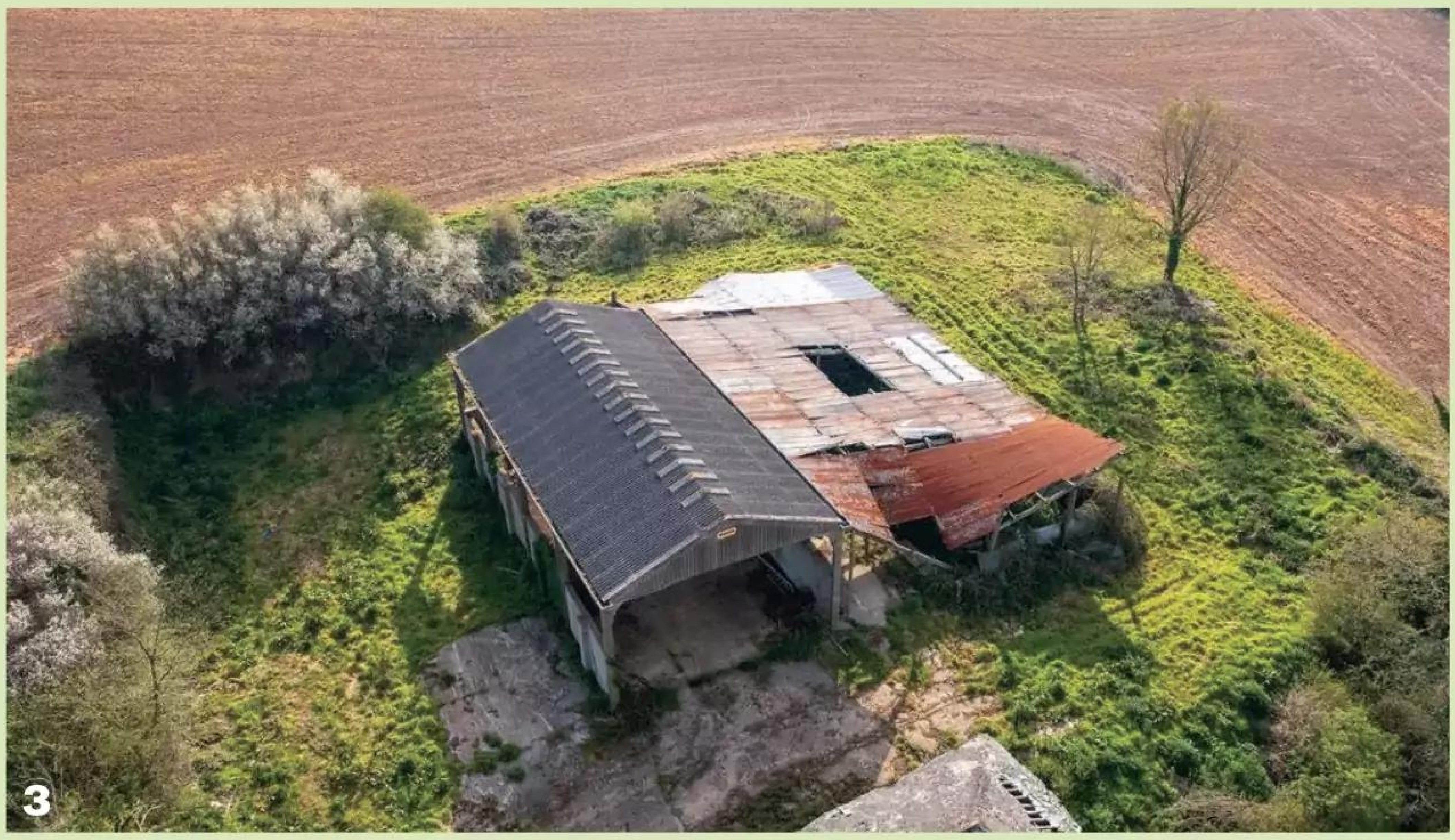
CONTACT Philip Martin 01872 242244 sales@philip-martin.co.uk

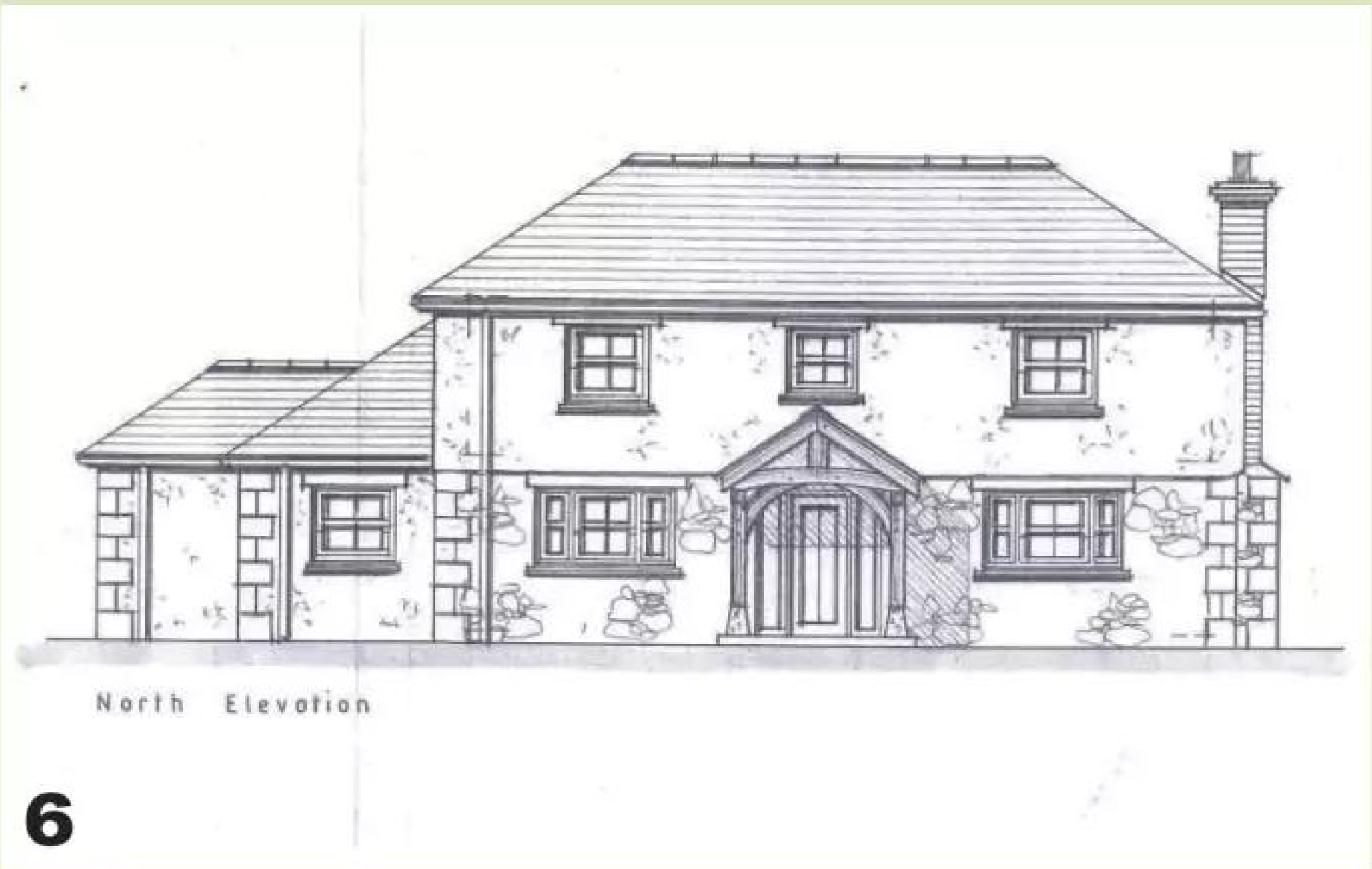
Plot ID: 136927

Set in just shy of an acre, Kestle Farm is a rural building plot located at the end of a private lane with a lovely outlook, providing the purchaser with a desirable level of peace and privacy.

Detailed planning permission was granted in 2022 for the demolition of the derelict covered yard/hay shed currently on site. Consent allows for the erection of a replacement four-bedroom family home of around 171m² with driveway access and a double garage. There is ample scope for the creation of gardens and landscaping. The finished building will enjoy rolling countryside views.

Ladock is a thriving community with a great range of amenities, including a pub, primary school, parish church, post office and village hall with regular clubs and activities. Ideally located for the south and north Cornish coasts, Newquay airport is just thirteen miles away. The larger city of Truro, six miles to the west, is renowned for its shops, cathedral, restaurants and main railway line linking to London Paddington.





1 The site is rural in nature

2 Rolling countryside views can be enjoyed from all angles

3 & 4 The derelict hay shed to be demolished and replaced, with great potential for landscaping

5 The peaceful plot is situated at the end of a private road

6 The proposed family house

LINCOLNSHIRE

ROTHWELL

School Lane

A generous building plot in a sought-after Lincolnshire Wolds village with full planning consent granted for a three- to four-bedroom property of around 127m^2.

Guide price: £80,000
Planning: West Lindsey District Council 146713
Contact: Masons Chartered Surveyors 01507 350500 enquiries@movewithmasons.co.uk
Plot ID: 136906

Planning: Sevenoaks District Council 23/00383/FUL
Contact: Neil Johnson Property Agents 01732 752001 neil@nj-pa.co.uk
Plot ID: 136871

BRENCHLEY, TONBRIDGE

Marle Place Road

A 0.2-acre custom build plot within a National Landscape Area. Full planning permission has been granted for a four-bedroom detached home of over 267m^2 plus a garage.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 22/02640/FULL
Contact: Lambert & Foster 01892 832325 paddockwood@lambertandfoster.co.uk
Plot ID: 136872

EAST LANGDON

Skylark Lodge

Plot measuring 25m x 25m with planning permission for a traditional-style, four-bedroom house of around 360m^2, located within the grounds of a grade II listed home.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Dover District Council 23/00473
Contact: Marshall & Clarke 01304 852960 jh@marshallandclarkehq.fsnet.co.uk
Plot ID: 136877

EGERTON

Appleby Farm, Mundy Bois Road

Barn set in around 2.75 acres with full planning permission for conversion into a single-storey, three-bedroom detached home with off-road parking.
Guide price: £495,000
Planning: Ashford Borough Council PA/2024/1427
Contact: Harpers & Hurlingham 01580 715400 enquiries@harpersandhurlingham.com
Plot ID: 136874

LOOSE, MAIDSTONE

Loose Road

Detached bungalow with planning permission to be extended upwards to create a four-bedroom 231m^2 chalet bungalow. The site totals 0.5 acres and includes a plot to the rear with full consent for two detached dwellings.
Guide price: £795,000
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 24/502475/full
Contact: Hunters - Land & New Homes South Kent 0330 120 0750 newbuildskent@hunters.com
Plot ID: 136812

ST. MICHAELS, TENTERDEN

Oak Grove Lane

A 0.3-acre plot with full planning permission for a detached, architect-designed four-bedroom country house of around 204m^2 complete with a large garden, three-bay open garage and stunning countryside views.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Ashford Borough Council NOT/2022/2419
Contact: Hobbs Parker 01580 766766 tenterden@hobbsparker.co.uk
Plot ID: 136878

ST. PAULS CRAY, ORPINGTON

Leesons Hill

Plot of around 341m^2 with planning permission for a three-bedroom detached dwelling of 114m^2. There are two plots available.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: London Borough of Bromley 23/03620/FULL1
Contact: Pullen Estate Agents 020 3489 9589 tom@pullenestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136817

LANCASHIRE

BANKS

Charnleys Lane

Single plot with planning consent for a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: West Lancashire Borough Council 2020/0843/ful
Contact: Flexi Agent 01704 889455 sales@flexi-agent.co.uk
Plot ID: 136801

ST. HELENS

Irwin Road

Land for sale with permission for the erection of a four-bedroom home.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council P/2007/1078
Contact: John Brown & Company 01744 766900 sthelens@johnbrowns.co.uk
Plot ID: 136949

LINCOLNSHIRE

HIBALDSTOW

Brigg Road

Plot with consent for a single storey, detached two-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £750,000
Planning: North Lincolnshire Council PA/2023/1914
Contact: EA Ben Cade 01724 372011 info@eabencade.co.uk
Plot ID: 136836

LOUTH

Grimsby

Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a detached, four-bedroom family home.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: East Lindsey District Council N/105/00097/23
Contact: Lovelle Estate Agency 01472 251918 grimsby@lovelle-property.co.uk
Plot ID: 136785

MANBY

Plot 1, Carlton Road

A single building plot for the construction of a five-bedroom home.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: East Lindsey District Council N/113/01855/22
Contact: Mundys 01673 847487 marketrasen@mundys.net
Plot ID: 136992

NORFOLK

KING'S LYNN

Snettisham

Plot of land with consent for the demolition of the existing barn and construction of a two-bedroom detached bungalow in its place.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 23/01215/F
Contact: The Norfolk Agents 01328 862395 info@thenorfolkagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136950

WALSOKEN

Plot 2 - Lynn Road

Single plot for a three-bedroom house and a detached single garage.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: Dumfries and Galloway Council 24/1435/pip
Contact: Phoenix Property Services 01634 575575 info@phoenixpropertyservices.co.uk
Plot ID: 136764

NORTH YORKSHIRE

HARROGATE

Puro Rutland Drive

Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a five-bedroom detached house and garage.
Guide price: £1,200,000
Planning: Harrogate Borough Council ZC24/03590/FUL

NORFOLK

DOWNHAM MARKET

Nightingale Lane

A single plot with planning permission in place for the construction of a three-bedroom home.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 24/00523/F
Contact: Ashton Roberts 01366 388991 info@ashtonroberts.co.uk
Plot ID: 136920

HIGHLAND

AULTBEA
Bridgend
A plot of just under three acres with full planning permission granted and building warrant given for a four-bedroom house with 360-degree views and a separate garage.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: Highland Council 23/04878/ful
Contact: Prime Property Auctions 0141 459 0201 info@primepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136908

Contact: Myrings 01423 566400 sales@myringsestateagents.com
Plot ID: 136997

NORTHALLERTON
Turker Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for a detached three-bedroom house.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: North Yorkshire Council ZB24/01182/FUL
Contact: Northallerton Estate Agents 01609 771959 info@northallertonestateagency.co.uk
Plot ID: 136861

RIPON
Thornton Watlass
Single plot with consent in place for three detached residential dwellings.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: North Yorkshire Council 22/01590/MBN
Contact: Savills 01904 617800 york@savills.com
Plot ID: 136911

SOMERSET

BRIDGWATER
Old Basin
Plot of land with planning permission granted for a pair of four-bedroom detached properties.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Sedgemoor District Council 37/20/00056
Contact: Connells 01823 334433 taunton@connells.co.uk
Plot ID: 136951

NEWBURY
Cloonellan Farm
Plot with planning permission for the conversion of the existing building into a four-bedroom property and the construction of a pair of three-bedroom semi-detached barns.
Guide price: £800,000
Planning: Mendip District Council 2023/1072/PAA
Contact: Savills 01225 874455 bath@savills.co.uk
Plot ID: 136760

STAFFORDSHIRE

HEATH HAYES
Wimblebury Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a single home.
Guide price: £85,000
Planning: Cannock Chase District Council CH/23/0367
Contact: Webbs Estate Agents 01543 468846 kirsty.webb@webbsestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136987

SUFFOLK

BURY ST EDMUNDS
Rede
Single plot with planning consent for the erection of a four-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: West Suffolk Council DC/24/1734/ful
Contact: Michaels Property Consultants 01206 576999 sales@michaelsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136808

MILDEN
Powney Street
A building plot with consent for a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Babergh District Council DC/24/01373
Contact: Frost and Partners 01473 823456 sales@frostandpartners.co.uk
Plot ID: 136898

SURREY

FARNHAM
Averly Lane
Single plot with planning permission granted for the erection of a detached four-bedroom home.
Guide price: £550,000
Planning: Waverley Borough Council WA/2022/02046
Contact: Andrew Lodge 01252 717705 info@andrewlodge.net
Plot ID: 136777

LEATHERHEAD
Poplar
Plot of land with planning consent for a three-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £315,000
Planning: Mole Valley District Council MO/2023/0106/PLA
Contact: Patrick Gardner 01372 360078 leatherhead@patrickgardner.com
Plot ID: 136778

OXTED
Detillens Lane
A building plot with planning permission for the construction of a five-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £575,000
Planning: Tandridge District Council 2024/351
Contact: Christopher St James 020 8296 1270 info@csj.eu.com
Plot ID: 136886

WEST YORKSHIRE

LUDDENDENFOOT
Grosvenor Place
Plot of land with planning consent for the construction of a pair of three-bedroom detached dwellings.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council 19/00395/FUL
Contact: Peter David Properties Ltd 01422 366948 halifax@peterdavid.co.uk
Plot ID: 136773

SOWERBY BRIDGE
Pye Nest Road
Single plot for the erection of a detached five-bedroom property.
Guide price: £99,500
Planning: Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council 24/00921/RES
Contact: Redwoods Estate Agents 01422 341411 halifax@redwoodsonline.com
Plot ID: 136835

WICKERSLEY
First Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of two detached residential homes.
Guide price: £52,500
Planning: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council RB2024/0468
Contact: Lincoln Ralph 01709 278978 info@lincolnralph.com
Plot ID: 136998

WILTSHIRE

CALNE
Ridgemead
A plot with planning permission for the construction of two, two-bedroom semi-detached houses.
Guide price: £75,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council 19/12109/FUL
Contact: Town & Country Property Auctions 01202 879157 contact@tcpa.co.uk
Plot ID: 136761

EAST GOMELDON
East Gomeldon Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the conversion of an existing outbuilding into a two- to three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council PL/2023/08818
Contact: Fox Grant 01722 782727 jeremy@foxgrant.com
Plot ID: 136958

WORCESTER

BEVERE
Northwick Road
A single building plot with planning consent in place for the construction of three detached homes.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Wychavon District Council W/24/01562/TBC5
Contact: Allan Morris 01684 561411 malvern@allan-morris.co.uk
Plot ID: 136948

CHARLTON
Sidings Lane
Plot with consent for the construction of two detached bungalows.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Wychavon District Council W/23/02505/out
Contact: Lambert's Sales & Lettings 01527 61222 move@john-lambert.co.uk
Plot ID: 136915

SCOTLAND

ABERDEENSHIRE

BANCHORY
Inchmarlo
A single plot with planning permission for a detached residential dwelling.
Guide price: £160,000
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council APP/2024/1247
Contact: Aberdeen & Northern Estates 01467 623800 estates@anmgroup.co.uk
Plot ID: 136960

ARGYLL AND BUTE

ISLE OF TIREE
Caolis
Plot with consent for the erection of a detached house, boathouse and walled garden, and the installation

PEMBROKESHIRE

PEMBROKE
Cosheton
A 0.2-acre plot with planning permission granted for the construction of a single four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Pembrokeshire County Council 23/0794/PA
Contact: FBM 01646 682396 pembroke@fbm.co.uk
Plot ID: 136929

of a septic tank and soakaway.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 23/02091/PP
Contact: MacPhee & Partners 01397 702200 property@macphee.co.uk
Plot ID: 136828

KILCREGGAN
Ferry Brae
Plot of land with planning permission for three detached properties.
Guide price: £95,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 19/02612/pp
Contact: Future Property Auctions - Glasgow 0345 646 1117 info@futurepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136802

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

DUMFRIES
Ruthwell
A single plot of land with planning permission granted for one home.
Guide price: £90,000
Planning: Dumfries and Galloway Council 24/1599/pip
Contact: eXp World UK 01462 228653 info@exprealty.com
Plot ID: 136803

EAST AYRSHIRE

MUIRKIRK
Kirk Green
A single plot for the erection of a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: East Ayrshire Council 06/0147/FL
Contact: Prime Property Auctions 0141 459 0201 info@primepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136942

HIGHLAND

SMITHFIELD
Eight Acres
Plot with planning permission in principle for a single home.
Guide price: £130,000
Planning: Highland Council 24/0318/pip
Contact: Munro & Noble 01463 225533 property@munronoble.com
Plot ID: 136963

STAXIGOE
Elzy Road
A large plot with pre-application planning advice for a single-storey or one-and-a-half-storey house, within an enclave of four plots.
Guide price: £70,000
Planning: Highland Council 24/03848/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07984 617576 jcb509@ymail.com
Plot ID: 136850

STRATH
Plot 7 of Lonemore
Single plot with planning consent already granted for a two-storey, three-bedroom home.
Guide price: £80,000
Planning: Highland Council 07/00105/fulrc
Contact: South Forrest 01463 237171 email@southforrest.co.uk
Plot ID: 136995

MIDLOTHIAN

BONNYRIGG
Rosewell Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a detached property with a detached garage.
Guide price: £199,000
Planning: Midlothian Council 24/00513/ppp
Contact: Ballantynes 0131 459 2222 edinburgh@ballantynes.uk.com
Plot ID: 136887

ROSEWELL
Thornton Road
Plot of land with permission for a single-storey residential dwelling.
Guide price: £299,000
Planning: Midlothian Council 23/00594/msc
Contact: Ballantynes 0131 459 2222 edinburgh@ballantynes.uk.com
Plot ID: 136824

NORTH LANARKSHIRE

MOTHERWELL
Farm Street
Plot of land with planning permission for a two-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: North Lanarkshire Council 25/00009/ful
Contact: AB Properties 01555 660077 admin@ab-properties.co.uk
Plot ID: 136965

SHOTTS
Knoll Croft Road
Building plot with planning permission in principle for a detached house.
Guide price: £105,000
Planning: North Lanarkshire Council 24/00767/ppp
Contact: AB Properties 01555 660077 admin@ab-properties.co.uk
Plot ID: 136988

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

TRIMSARAN
Cae Linda
Plot of land with consent for the erection of a single detached home.
Guide price: £62,500
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/04508
Contact: Willow Estates 01554 758123 properties@willow-estates.com
Plot ID: 136800

GLAMORGAN

PENCLAWDD
Pen Y Lan
Plot with planning permission for the construction of a dormer bungalow.
Guide price: £70,000
Planning: Swansea Council 2022/2427/out
Contact: Dawsons 01792 646060 sw@dawsonsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136939

PEMBROKESHIRE

PEMBROKE DOCK
Imble Street
Plot with consent for a detached, two-bedroom property with an open-plan kitchen/living/dining space.
Guide price: £35,000
Planning: Pembrokeshire County Council 12/0422/PA
Contact: West Wales Properties 01437 762626 / 0845 094 3006 haverfordwest @westwalesproperties.co.uk
Plot ID: 136935

TENBY
Jameston
Plot with planning permission granted for the construction of a detached four- to five-bedroom property.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Pembrokeshire County Council NP/18/0610/FUL
Contact: Auction House London 020 7625 9007 info@auctionhouselondon.co.uk
Plot ID: 136933

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Want more plot finding advice? Join us at Build It Live for our annual exhibitions in Bicester, Exeter and Kent.

Talk to the experts
Our planning experts Julia Riddle and Martin Gaine will be on hand all weekend to answer your questions and help make that first stage of your project a little easier to digest.

Attend our seminar: How to find land and getting planning permission
Whether it's a new build, renovation or extension, creating your dream home starts with obtaining planning consent. Our plot and planning specialist guides you through the essential elements, including submitting your application, and offers invaluable advice on finding the right plot of land.

Visit the LAND ZONE brought to you by PlotBrowser.com
Check out our gallery of current available plots in the region, plus the latest serviced plot projects across the UK. Discover everything you need to know about finding the right plot for your project.

Find out more and book your tickets: **www.builditlive.co.uk**

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Model	Motor	CFM	Tank	Order Code	exc.VAT	WAS inc.VAT	inc.VAT
8/260	2HP	7	24ltr	000119490	£104.99	£129.59	£125.99
11/550	2.5HP	9.3	50ltr	000119505	£159.98	£203.98	£191.98
16/550	3HP	14.5	50L	000119510	£229.98	£286.80	£275.98
16/1050	3HP	14.5	100ltr	000119515	£289.98	£358.80	£347.98

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‡ WAS £334.80 inc.VAT
◆ WAS £634.80 inc.VAT ● WAS £1138.80 inc.VAT

Model	Volts	KVA	HP	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
PG2500A	230	2.2	5.6	010617850	£219.00	£262.80
PG3800A	230	3	5.6	010617852	£249.00	£298.80
PG3800ADV ‡	230/110	3	5.6	010617854	£269.00	£322.80
PG6500ADVES ◆	230/110	5.5	9.7	010617856	£519.00	£622.80
PG9000ADVES ●	230/110	5.5	16	010617860	£895.00	£1074.00

ANGLE GRINDERS

‡ WAS £35.98 inc.VAT

Model	Motor	Order Code	exc. VAT	inc. VAT
CAG800B‡	800W	060512110	£28.99	£34.79
CON1150	1150W	060514015	£34.99	£41.99
CAG2350C	2350W	060512030	£64.99	£77.99

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1	CBB209C ‡	9 Dr Chest	070118032	£149.98	£179.98
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3	CTC1300C	13 Dr Combi	070113042	£189.98	£227.98

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CBB200	200	060710490	£94.99	£113.99
CHDB500	150	060710492	£119.98	£143.98
CBB250‡	250	060710491	£169.98	£203.98

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Model	Heat Output	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
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DEVIL 2800PTC-B	2.8kW	010415602	£49.98	£59.98
Devil 5000PTC	3.3-5kW	010415340	£72.99	£87.59
Devil 9000PTC	6-9kW	010415238	£129.98	£155.98

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CHT862	235	040212862	£114.99	£137.99
CHT859	300	040213859	£197.00	£236.40
PRO396	222	040218396	£629.00	£754.80

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PVP11A

HSEC650A

*Pumps solids up to 35mm dia.
†Sewage cutter pump

Models	Max Flow	Max Head	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
CSE400A	115L	8m	051010690	£49.98	£59.98
PSV3A*	133L	8m	051016042	£49.98	£59.98
PSV4A*	216L	8m	051016044	£59.98	£71.98
HIPPO 2A	85L	6m	051010192	£76.99	£92.39
PVP11A*	258L	11m	051016060	£89.98	£107.98
HSEC650A†	290L	9.5m	051011650	£249.00	£298.80

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Model	Motor (W) Speeds	Order Code	exc.VAT	WAS inc.VAT	inc.VAT
CDP5EB	350 / 5	060712030	£84.99	£113.99	£101.99
CDP5RB	350 / 5	060710035	£89.98	£113.99	£107.98
CDP102B	350 / 5	060715512	£109.98	-	£131.98
CDP152B	450 / 12	060715522	£179.00	-	£214.80
CDP452B	550 / 16	060715575	£289.00	£358.80	£346.80
CDP502F	1100 / 12	060715592	£675.00	£826.80	£810.00

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◆ WAS £382.80 inc.VAT

Model	Dims. LxWxH (mm)	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
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CWB2001P	2000x650x865	040317809	£279.98	£335.98
CWB2000D◆	2000x650x880	040317807	£309.00	£370.80

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In Focus

National Self Build & Renovation Centre

We take a closer look at the products and services you can discover at Swindon's NSBRC – the UK's permanent visitor centre for self builders and home renovators

Whether you're tackling a self build or a renovation, Swindon's National Self Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC) is a must-visit venue if you're looking to commission a bespoke scheme. Since it was established in 2007, the centre has provided a treasure trove for visitors to explore an array of design solutions, construction systems, products and technologies, with over 200 permanent exhibits. This month, we've handpicked a selection of the NSBRC's exhibitors to consider for your next project.

Upcoming events

The centre is open to visitors six days a week. As well as individual stands, the new build zone and Renovation House are excellent places to pick up ideas. You can also explore Potton's Ruskin show home for inspiration. The NSBRC hosts regular events, too, which provide a valuable opportunity to speak with industry specialists. The schedule includes a selection of courses, workshops, market days and shows. You can see the full calendar at www.nsbrc.co.uk, but here are some upcoming highlights:

NSBRC EVENTS

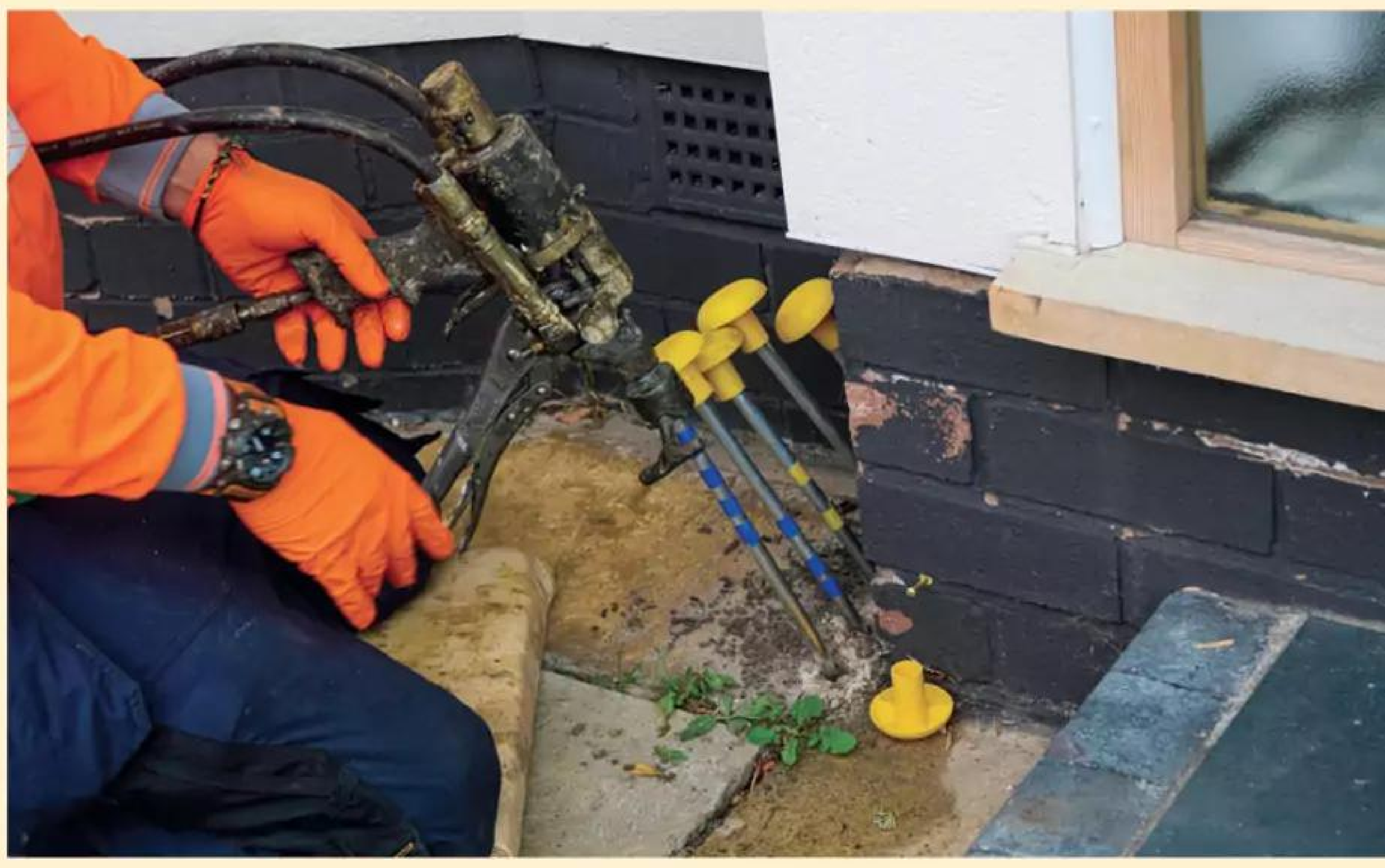
5th April **Eco Workshop (Heat & Energy)**
A full-day event with industry experts, covering everything from renewable technologies to building fabric.

11th April **NSBRC Market Day**
Meet exhibitors (more than 10 are already signed up) and enjoy a free guided tour of the new build educational zone.

25th-26th April **Passivhaus Workshop**
Attend informative seminars, Q&A sessions, as well as live guided tours from NSBRC experts, all delivered in partnership with the Passivhaus Trust.

16th-17th May **The Festival of Sustainable Homes**
Meet hundreds of exhibitors and get up-to-date advice on improving energy efficiency and comfort levels to create a healthy home with low energy bills.

Left: Building an eco home? Exhibitors such as underfloor heating and heat pump experts Nu-Heat (www.nu-heat.co.uk) are available to speak to on the NSBRC's major show dates



Right: Numerous suppliers, including Mainmark (www.mainmark.com/uk) are on hand at the NSBRC's events. Mainmark offers a range of underpinning solutions to help raise and relevel sunken structures

Left: The NSBRC is home to hundreds of permanent exhibitors, including Ecological Building Systems (www.ecologicalbuildingsystems.com). The company supplies innovative and sustainable building materials for both self builds and renovations

Puustelli
MIINUS

The sustainable kitchen innovation

Puustelli Miinus kitchens are a complete rethink of how kitchens can be made. The first true innovation in decades, Miinus combines long-lasting durability, modular design, and sustainability. Crafted with low-VOC materials and 100% recyclable components, these kitchens are better for the planet and better for you. With Miinus, you can create a space that's not only stylish but also eco-friendly and built to last. Sustique is the UK's sole authorised agent for Puustelli Miinus kitchens. Sustique provides a complete design and supply service for anywhere in the UK.

SUSTIQUE

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DURACELL
ENERGY
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The National Self Build & Renovation Centre, Swindon
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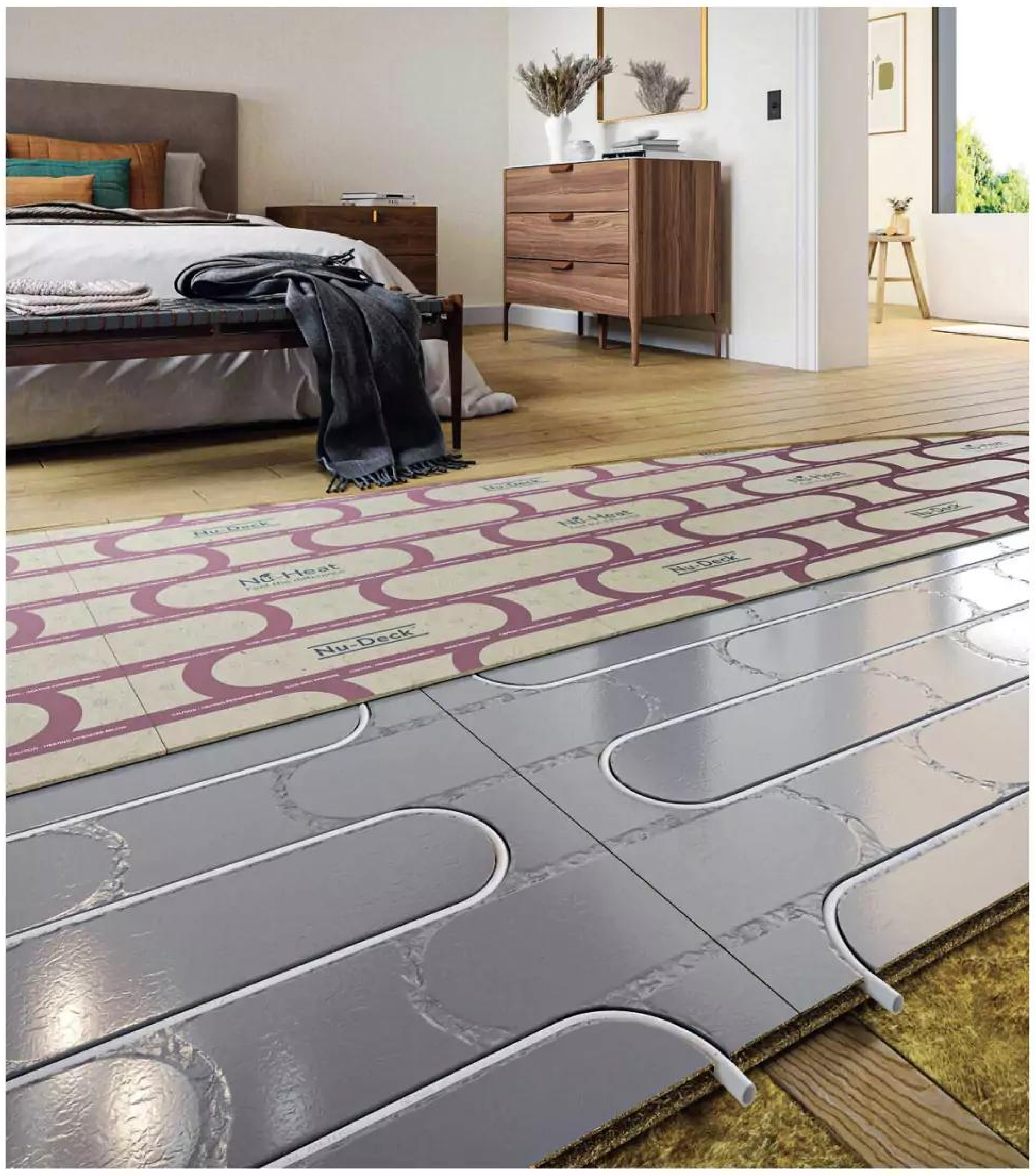
Tel: 0808 281 2855 **Web:** www.duracellenergy.com



One system, two solutions: Nu-Deck transforms timber floor heating

For homes with suspended timber floors, installing water underfloor heating has often required a new or replacement floor deck with a separate UFH system either laid either on top or fitted from below.

Enter Nu-Deck, the combined UFH system and structural floor deck solution—in one. Designed specifically for joisted floors, this innovative system caters perfectly to the needs of both self-builders and renovators.

Designed for quick and easy installation, Nu-Deck's routed tongue and groove panels are bi-directional to suit changing joist directions, minimising floor preparation. Cover boards feature highly visible pipe and fixing indicators, preventing punctures when floor coverings go down.

Nu-Deck's slim profile is particularly beneficial for retrofitting underfloor heating in older properties or the upper floors of new builds, where maintaining floor height is crucial.

Because the underfloor heating pipes are integrated within the floor deck, height build-up is only 6mm more than standard floor-grade chipboard panels. For many, this retrofit-friendly system represents a significant step forward, combining the comfort and efficiency of modern heating technology with traditional timber floor construction.

At its core, Nu-Deck is engineered to deliver efficient heat distribution for any scenario. An aluminium diffuser spreads the heat evenly across the floor, ensuring consistent warmth during even the coldest months. Providing improved energy efficiency in comparison to radiators, Nu-Deck's heating performance also makes it an excellent emitter for low-temperature heat sources such as heat pumps.

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Dryseal: A green roofing option

When waterproofing green roofs the membrane itself must also be taken into account when thinking about the overall environmental picture. The method of manufacture, component chemicals and long-term environmental impact of the membrane itself can be as significant as the benefits of a bio-diverse 'green' roof. Dryseal is Hambleside Danelaw's pre-cured, GRP waterproofing membrane, for flat and low-pitched roofing that's perfectly suited for green installations. Visit Hambleside Danelaw's website to learn more.

Tel: 01327 701930 **Web:** www.dryseal.org

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Find us at the NSBRC: Stand 231 and Professional Services Hub.

FLEMINGHOMES

Tel: 01361 883785 **Web:** www.fleminghomes.co.uk

A full-circle approach to energy efficient homes

Your home should do more than provide shelter and be energy efficient. If designed correctly it'll be a far more healthy and comfortable environment to live in. With energy costs rising and environmental concerns growing, implementing energy efficient home solutions isn't just a smart decision - it's an essential one. From sourcing the finest quality products to providing expert guidance at every stage of the project, we ensure every detail contributes to the creation of a truly life changing home. 21 Degrees is your trusted partner in creating buildings that not only meet the highest standards of energy efficiency but also provide unparalleled comfort, health, and long-term value.

21°

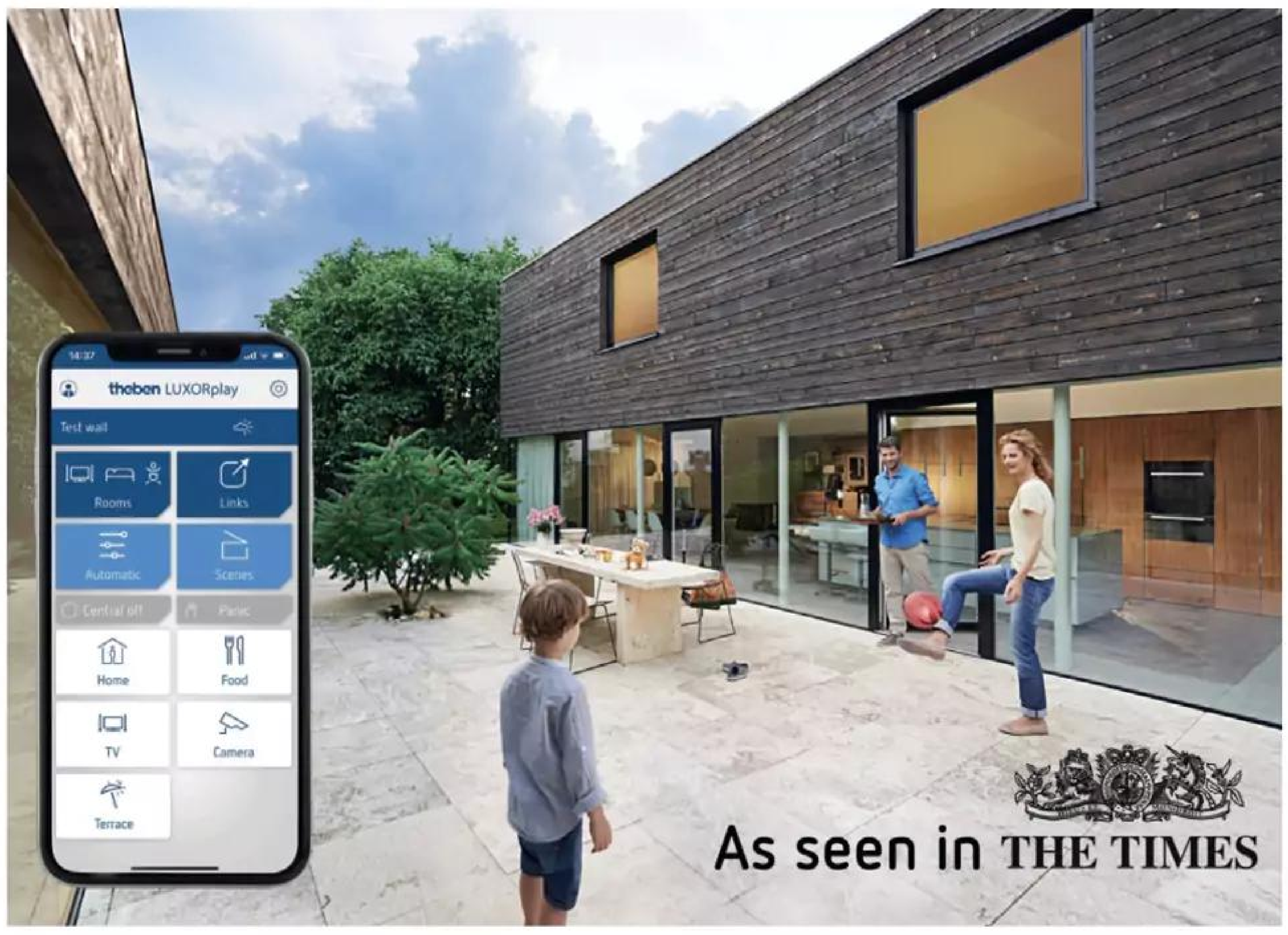
Tel: 01484 461705 **Web:** www.21degrees.com

From Barn to Beauty: Rural Residential Conversions

Transforming a rural agricultural building into a new residential dwelling can result in a truly spectacular home. Barn conversions are increasing in popularity, with self-builders creating stunning homes using the farm building's original structure and features. Navigating this kind of conversion requires a specialist, sensitive approach. Award-winning Frame Technologies has years of experience in this area, helping self-builders to protect the structure while delivering maximum energy-efficiency and a modern touch.

FRAME TECHNOLOGIES
SELF-BUILD TIMBER FRAME

Tel: 01544 267124 **Web:** www.frametechnologies.co.uk



Luxury and comfort at your fingertips

Planning your dream home? Whether you're building from the ground up or upgrading an existing property, LUXORliving from Theben brings effortless smart home control to your fingertips. Adjust lighting, heating, and blinds with a simple push of a button, a mobile app, or even voice commands – all with the reliability of KNX technology. Designed for both new builds and renovations, LUXORliving makes comfort, efficiency, and convenience part of your everyday life.

theben

Tel: 01237 751 546 **Web:** www.luxorliving.co.uk

RainWater Harvesting .co.uk

Rainwater harvesting specialists

Rainwater Harvesting Ltd is a UK based supplier & manufacturer of domestic rainwater harvesting systems. Rainwater harvesting is the process of collecting rainwater from the roof via the downpipes through a self-cleaning filter and stored in an underground tank. You can use rainwater for garden irrigation, car washing, toilet flushing and washing machines. Reduce your mains water consumption by up to 50% and future proof your home with rainwater harvesting.

Tel: 01733 405 111
Web: www.rainwaterharvesting.co.uk

CIAT

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The role of the Chartered Architectural Technologist is to ensure their building projects are treated with the technological respect they need and are maintained or built to the highest standard. Using both innovative and traditional methods, they make sure the built environment meets the needs of both people and planet, from accessibility to sustainability. Chartered Architectural Technologists are leaders of technological design, forming the link between concept, innovation, and realisation.

Tel: 020 7278 2206
Web www.architecturaltechnology.com

Transform your home with timber cladding from Vastern Timber

Discover the perfect blend of quality and versatility at Vastern Timber, your go-to destination for locally-grown timber cladding. Our extensive selection includes larch, cedar, and Brimstone, catering to both trade professionals and DIY enthusiasts. Elevate your project with timber cladding that seamlessly adapts to contemporary or rustic design styles, enhancing the aesthetic of any building.

Navigating the multitude of options available can be daunting, but fear not – at Vastern Timber, we bring years of experience and expertise to guide you. Thousands have trusted us to assist in choosing the ideal timber cladding for their projects. Let our team help you navigate through the choices, ensuring that you not only stay within budget but also achieve the perfect blend of style and functionality.

Tel: 01793 853281 **Web:** www.vastern.co.uk

Nordic Panels: Perfect interior walls and ceilings

Nordic Panels provide high quality walls and ceilings that are straightforward to install and are ideal for any project, from renovations to new builds. These panels can be applied directly onto stud work or over existing surfaces. They tolerate wide temperature and humidity fluctuations and can be used in any room. Sustainable and produced without any harmful solvents, Nordic Panels have a fantastic M1 rating for indoor emissions, making them one of the cleanest interior wood fibre panels on the market. Nordic Panels does not need skimming or priming, saving on labour, time and cost. The Pre-Painted Panels for walls and ceilings give an outstanding, durable finish without painting. If you want a professional interior that is easy to install, durable and environmentally friendly, then Nordic Panels are for you!

Tel: 01932 645050 **Web:** www.scandinaviantrading.co.uk

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Do you need the bother of organising a separate heating system, or could the HPV Series be for you?

Heat Pump Ventilation (HPV) uniquely provides efficient and responsive space heating, cooling, hot water and heat recovery ventilation all in one Passivhaus Certified system. It is suitable for well insulated and airtight homes where energy efficiency, health and running economy are paramount.

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Ecological Building Systems, a leading supplier of natural building products, supports architects, builders and self-builders in achieving Passive House standards, as well as renovation, retrofit and airtightness projects. The company exhibits at two stands at the NSBRC. Stand 159 is dedicated to retrofit and Stand 160 focuses on Passive House projects. The retrofit stand features the innovative Retro EcoWall, a natural insulated wall system ideal for ecological renovations. At the Passive House stand, visitors can explore the Passive EcoWall, developed for new-build timber frame projects. Ecological Building Systems also presents complete sustainable insulation solutions, featuring airtight membranes, tapes, wood fibre boards and renovation materials. Visitors can book a free one-to-one design consultation, where the expert technical team provides tailored advice and the best project solutions.

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As a leading platform lift company, Gartec has been opening up possibilities for over 30 years with unobtrusive and elegant home lifts, transforming properties into true 'forever' homes.

Previously named Best Platform Lift Supplier and with the Aritco HomeLift Compact awarded Best Home Technology Product by Build It, Gartec continues to set the standard in home lift solutions. Offering a wide variety of lift options that blend style and functionality, Gartec ensures each lift is tailored to your home. Whether your project involves tight spaces, traditional features, or a contemporary aesthetic, our expert team is on hand from enquiry to aftercare to help find the perfect solution for you.

"Customisation is the driving factor for many of our customers," explains Matthew Akerman, Gartec Home Sales Director. "They want choices, and for those undertaking a home build, they seek a bespoke lift solution that complements their home environment."

The sleek Scandi design of the Aritco HomeLift, complete with smart technology and energy-efficient features, makes it one of Gartec's bestselling home lifts. Taking up minimal space—roughly the size of a small wardrobe—it is an essential addition for those looking to enhance their home with a high-quality, luxury feel.

"The appeal of home lifts is that they bring a luxurious experience to your home, offering convenience for day-to-day living now while removing any access barriers for the future," adds Matthew.

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Throughout the Centre, you'll also find examples of ROCKWOOL products in use in applications from lofts to walls.

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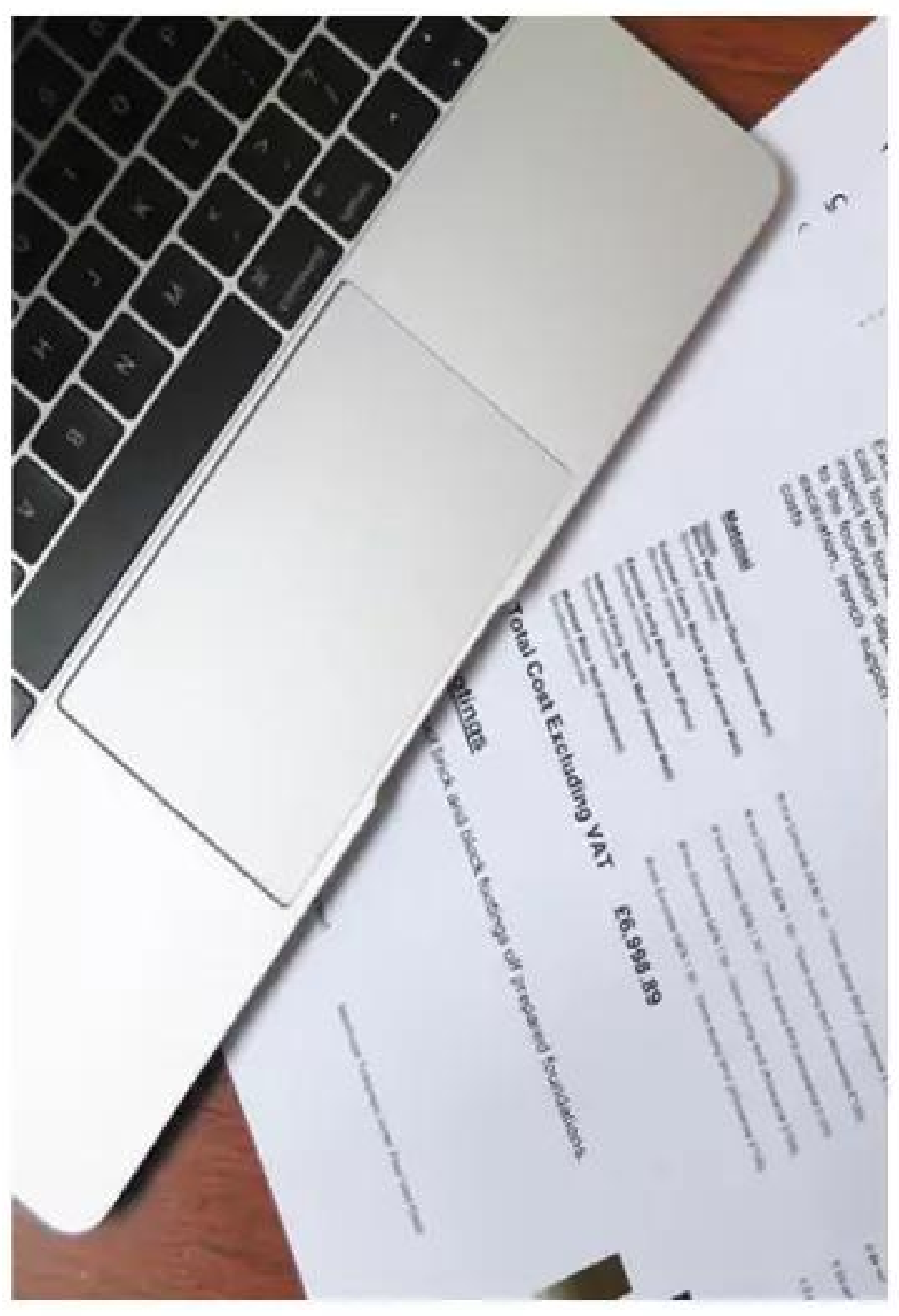

Looking to add space and value to your home?

If you're thinking about extending your home, knowing a realistic cost before you meet with builders can be vital. Not only will it help you to negotiate the cost of the job but it will also help you better understand your options of finishes and fittings and how this will impact the overall price. This tailored costing service includes a schedule planner and cashflow forecast for your extension – essential if you're looking to get a loan for your project.

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NSBRC: The Festival of Sustainable Homes, 16th-17th May

The 'Festival of Sustainable Homes' is an exciting, family-friendly show, which will highlight how we can all live more sustainably in our homes and communities. Offering the latest advice on improving both the energy efficiency and comfort levels of properties – for both new builds & existing homes. The two-day festival will avoid 'greenwash' and offer genuine information and inspiration for anyone interested in creating well-designed, healthy homes, through exhibits, seminars, live demonstrations and an unrivalled line up of experts on hand to share their knowledge. Our talks will provide relevant, up-to-date, guidance for both newcomers to house-building and skilled housing professionals. The Nature Zone will shine a light on charities and non-profit organisations who aim to improve our natural environment through targeted campaigns, free advice and educational outreach.The event sponsor is Good Energy. Good Energy is Britain's greenest energy supplier. Based here in the South West, they started out by supplying 100% renewable electricity sourced from independent British generators. Today, they not only provide green tariffs, but install bespoke heat pump, solar and battery systems designed around your home.

Show highlights include:
● Free entry, free parking ● Get the latest energy efficiency advice
● Guided educational tours of the NSBRC's fantastic life-size exhibits
● Inspiring talks each day ● Over 200 Exhibitors showcasing the latest products, technologies and services ● 1:2:1 Expert Advice
● Coffee Shop and sustainable food options ● Discover our Nature Zone

The Show runs on Friday 16th and Saturday 17th May with FREE advance tickets at: www.nsbrc.co.uk

The Festival of Sustainable Homes is easy to get to with the NSBRC located on Junction 16 of the M4 and parking is plentiful and FREE!

The National Self Build & Renovation Centre,
Lydiard Fields, Swindon, SN5 8UB – J16, M4

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- All members are committed to working with self- builders in a fair and transparent manner
- All members are funding the growth of the sector so more people can have an individual home
- All members are covered by NaCSBA's consumer Code of Practice – to protect you if things go wrong

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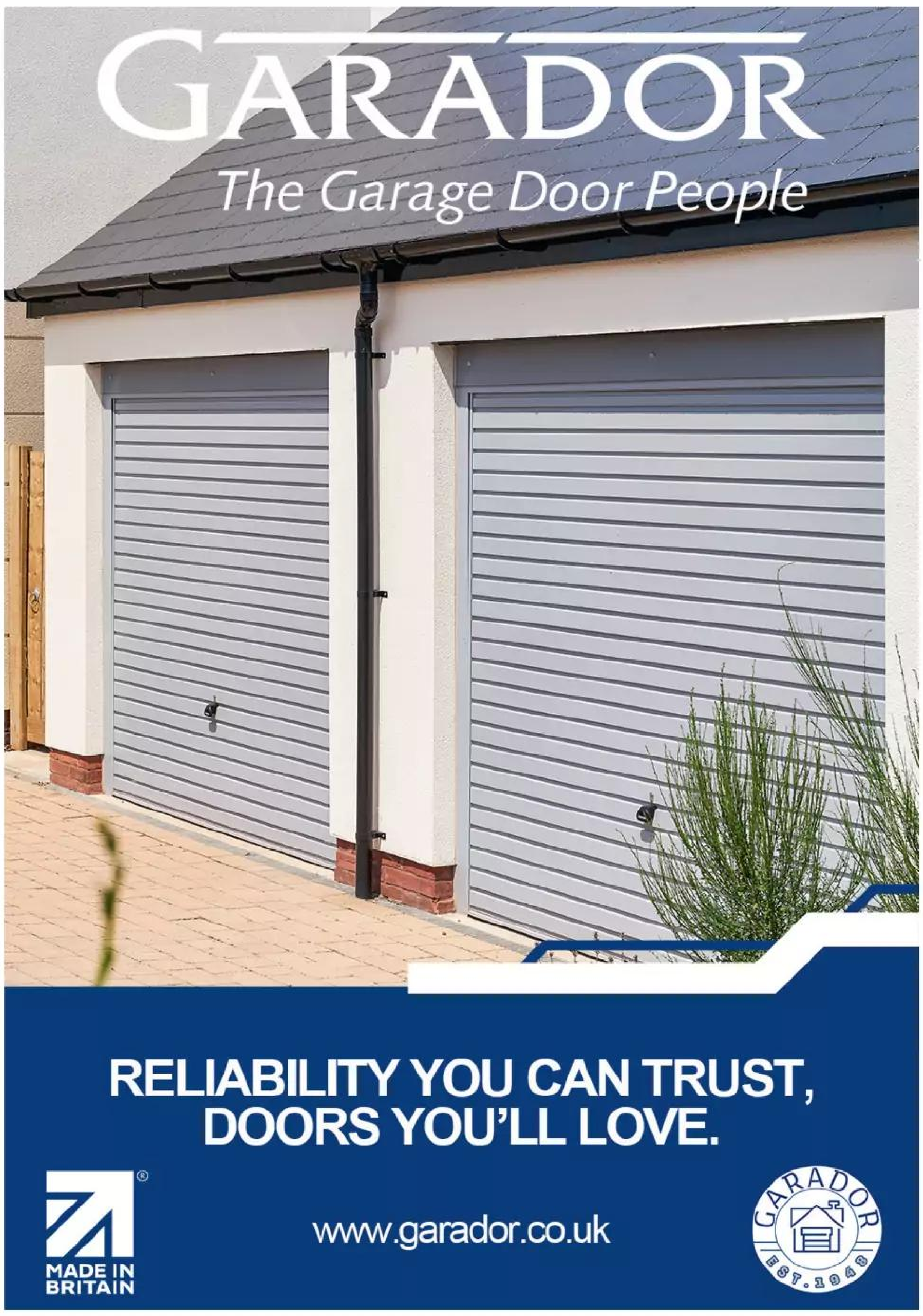
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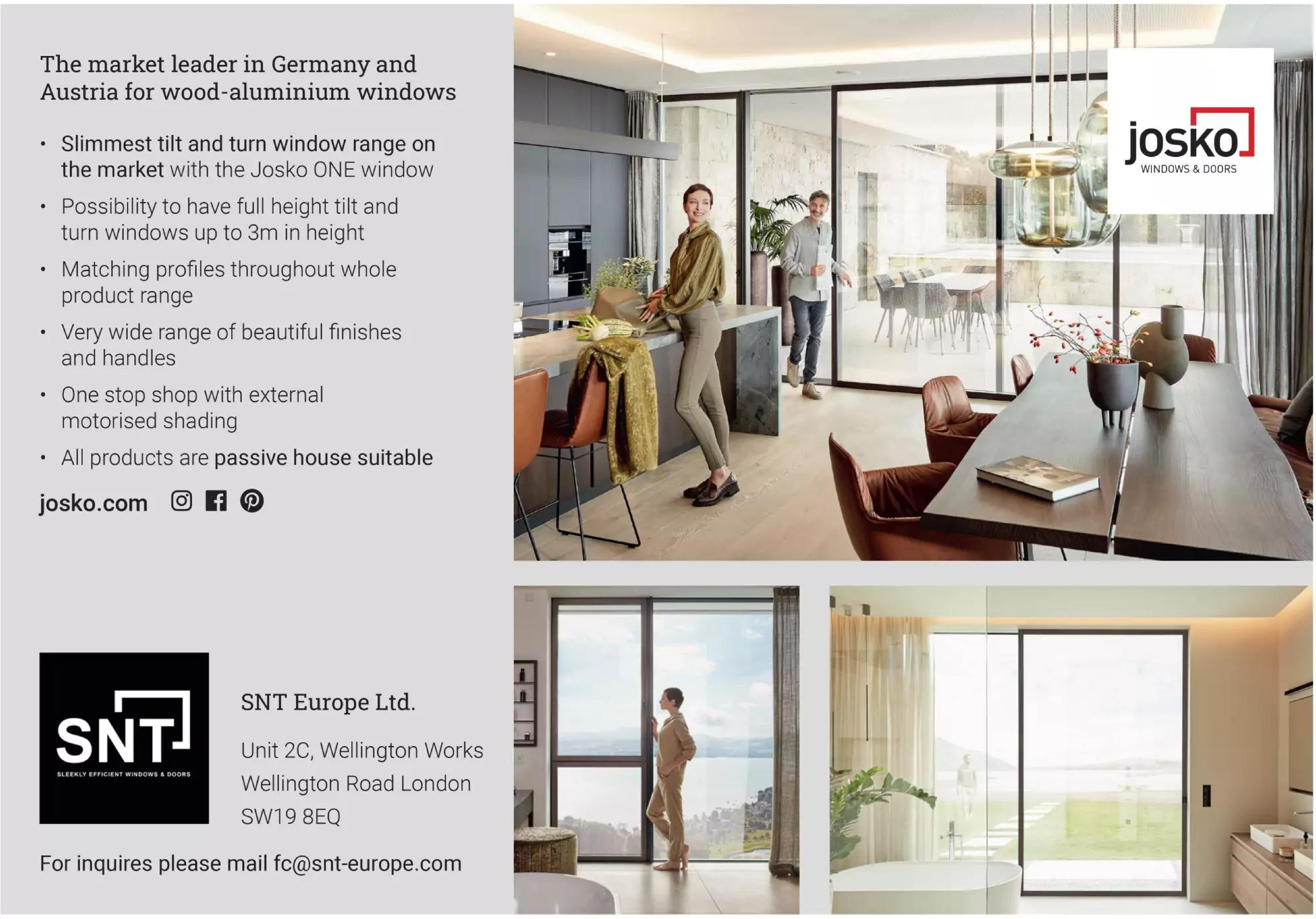
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next month...

June issue on sale 25th April

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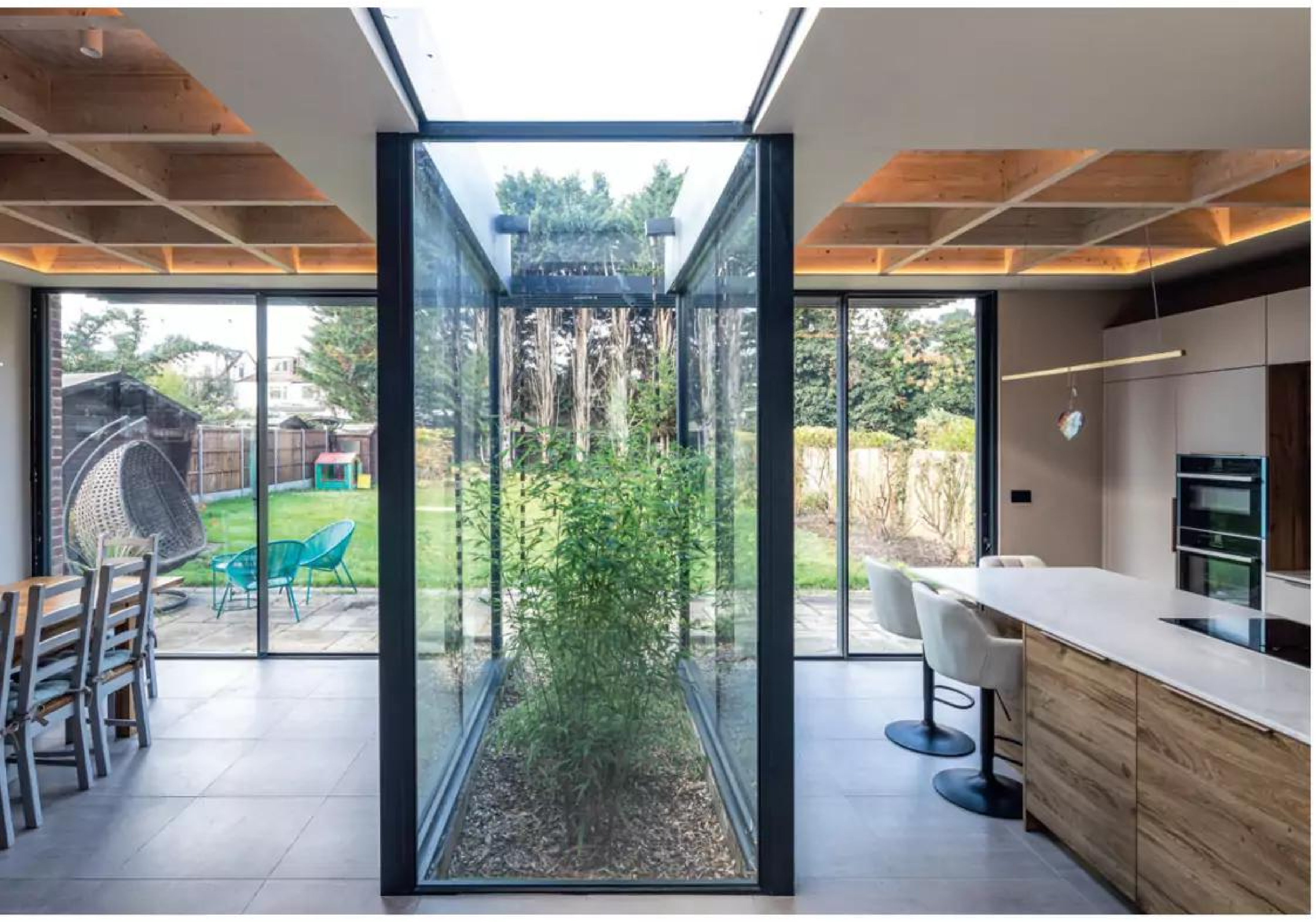

BUNGALOW RENOVATIONS

From layout improvements to extension opportunities, take a look at how you can transform a single-storey property

BI-FOLD DOORS

Explore how to add wow factor to your property with stylish bifolds, plus what to budget in 2025

PLUS PACKAGE HOMES, CLADDING, SELF BUILD COST GUIDE, HEAT PUMPS & MORE

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ARCHITECT'SVIEW

David Nossiter, director of David Nossiter Architects, shares his advice on turning a traditional barn into your dream home

Getting your barn conversion right

What key factors should a people consider when searching for the right barn to convert?

When you first start researching for your ideal project, it is worth checking whether there are any particular planning restrictions on the site. For example, is it situated within a national park, or an area of outstanding natural beauty? Or is the barn itself listed? This will enable you to work out what build routes are available and most suitable for your project, which will help to steer your design.

When it comes to the plot, take a look at what services are evident and if there is adequate space for parking, a garden and potentially a sewage treatment plant. Large trees surrounding the building could impact on the foundations, or they might have tree protection orders, so make sure to ask this before you start any design work.

Next, make a note of any cracks, decay or invasive vegetation. This can indicate that the barn isn't as structurally sound as it seems. Importantly, look at the price and think about if you might be over capitalising once you add the conversion costs on top of this.

On average, how much does this type of project cost?

I would recommend a budget of around £3,500 per m², but it is hard to estimate the total build costs for a barn conversion, because it very much depends on the nature of the existing building's fabric and its condition. To play it safe, I suggest you always allow for a contingency of around 10% for the construction costs, as you never know what you might uncover when undertaking the initial works. Also, keep in mind that typically VAT is charged at 5% on conversions to dwellings, plus there will be consultant and statutory authorities fees.

Converting a barn tends to be more expensive than a new build or standard renovation, but it is far more sustainable to repurpose an existing building. Barns also offer unique character and are often an integral part of the area's rural history.

What type of planning application is required for a barn conversion?

For this type of build, you will need either full permission, or prior approval under Class Q of permitted development (PD).

Class Q does not apply to properties that are listed or on protected land and it has very specific parameters that have to be met. So, you would be wise to read the legislation carefully and if necessary, appoint a planning consultant. One potential benefit of a full application is that planning policies are less prescriptive than PD rules, which allows for some interpretation by the case officer.

Surveys are also key when applying for permission for a conversion. They help to ascertain the condition of the barn and its aptness for alteration, which can enhance your planning application. For example, structural surveys will identify the adequacy of the existing building and what repairs are required and, if you are applying for PD, they can demonstrate that your barn is suitable for conversion.

When you first go to view a potential barn, take a good look around. If you see any decay or infestation within the wooden structure, a timber survey is essential to ensure the barn can withstand any changes. Similarly, if you see any evidence of wildlife, such as bats or owls, an ecological survey is a must for planning applications as it will help you obtain a licence to undertake the works.

STEVE LANCFIELD

Above: Designed by David Nossiter Architects, the form of this stunning conversion project elegantly marries modern aesthetic sensibilities with the rustic, historic charm of the original barn – complementing its picturesque countryside surroundings

What are the best energy efficiency upgrades to prioritise when dealing with an agricultural building?

With any changes you make, you will have to comply with the current Building Regulations to create a well-insulated home. When you begin, you'll need to install a new heating system. It's also highly likely that there will be limited mains services on the plot. Therefore, this is an ideal opportunity to explore heat pump options and the potential for a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system (MVHR). Heat tends to accumulate in the higher points of the building, called the stack effect, and MVHR will draw in the warmed air trapped at ceiling level and reuse this to help warm the cooler air at lower levels.

What are your top tips for creating a successful design?

Aim to keep the rustic characteristics of the property, as these are what will make your new home unique. Because of its past use, you need to be careful when looking at adding an additional storey internally. Most barns feature a steeply pitched roof which, although impressive, means there will be limited usable head height. Similarly, some structural timber beams could be at the wrong height to permit a mezzanine. Work with the existing plan and structure as much as possible, and resist the urge to create too many new zones.

Another quirk that comes with a barn conversion, is that the typology tends to have very few windows. Planners are normally reluctant to allow more openings within the walls and roof, for fear that it could harm the existing structure – so make sure not to have too heavy a hand when it comes to glazing. Where possible, use existing openings or those that might have been infilled, to draw in natural light and make the most of your enviable views.

David Nossiter is director of David Nossiter Architects. He is a RIBA Conservations registrant and award-winning charted architect with specialist expertise in barn conversions and residential architecture. For more information and to discuss your project call **020 8251 8978** or visit **www.davidnossiter.com**

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